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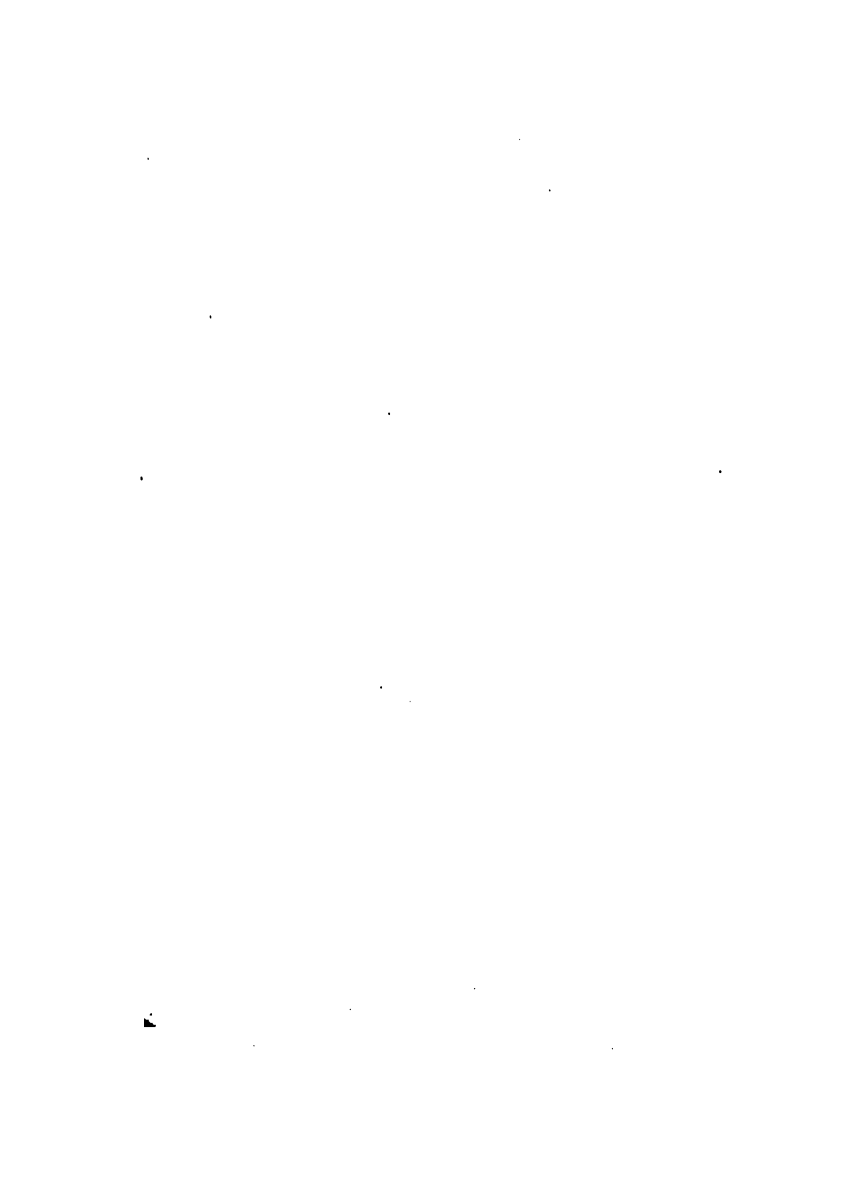
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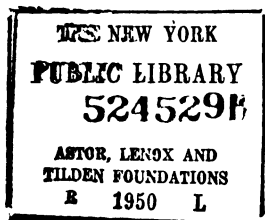
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THE BIBELOT BROTHERS  
NEW YORK



## CHAPTER I.

### BEING THE PROPER BEGINNING OF WHAT IS TO FOLLOW.

New York City. Downtown in the neighborhood of that thoroughfare famous for shearing of lambs, baiting of bears, and tail-twisting of bulls. A small office, high up in a tall building. Splendid bird's-eye view from the single window, of the bricks and mortar in party-wall of adjoining structure. Roll-top desk, file cabinet, revolving book case, and other furniture. Everything littered with papers, manufacturers' catalogues, samples of goods, and a confusing assortment of miscellaneous articles, both new and second-hand. Without attempting to enumerate their variety, such diverse objects as a brick-carrier's hod, a lady's bonnet, a bird cage, some pieces of brass tubing, a cash register, a pair of boxing gloves, a bicycle lamp, and two cans of corned beef, might be mentioned. A thick coating of dust had settled upon everything. The place was apparently a complete stranger to the efforts of janitors or cleaning women.

Seated at the desk was a fashionably attired young man, stop-watch in hand, engaged in driving a large wire nail through a block of yellow pine, with the aid of a small tack hammer. Presently he paused in *this puny labor*, made some pencil notes

upon a pad, and was just about to resume his hammering when the noise of footsteps in the tiled hallway outside, distracted his attention. Next moment the door of the office swung open and a portly, middle-aged gentleman entered.

"How d' do, Mr. Carnwood," exclaimed the younger individual; rising from his desk and advancing in order to shake hands with the newcomer. "Glad indeed to have the pleasure of welcoming you in my little establishment. Allow me to offer you a chair."

"Thanks, my boy," replied the elder, as he watched his host carefully remove a patent mouse-trap and several wrapped-up parcels from the only available seat. "You appear to be slightly crowded for room?"

"Yes," assented the other, "I must clear out a lot of this trash."

"Trash!" ejaculated the visitor, dropping plumply into his chair. "Well, you certainly have a strange assortment. How're you doing?" glancing as he spoke over at the open desk and its visible contents rather wonderingly. "Busy, eh?"

"Always busy, sir."

"Making lots of money?"

"Not yet. Merely beginning the game."

"Game? Well, you're right. Business nowadays is very much like a game. And a pretty difficult one at that, what with chance and the *queer moves* of opponents to confuse and *destroy your own combinations*. Nine years

ago I was as poor as—I'm never ashamed to tell it. I was a retail grocer in a little Western town, with no more apparent prospect of having a hundred dollars to the good at the end of a year, than of flying. But along came that"—

"Government contract?" interrupted the young man smilingly.

"Eh! Yes—You seem to have heard about it?" questioned Mr. Carnwood.

"Your biography has been printed broadcast," replied the other mildly.

"That's so. I forgot for a minute what an interest the public seems to take in my affairs. It is strange. If I had been unsuccessful in later operations of much more importance the newspapers would scarcely have used a dozen lines of comment upon me."

"Not they," replied the younger man decisively. "Editors must pander to the taste of their readers. The public delights in hearing about the few quickly amassed fortunes; not the countless commercial failures. I presume it was those syndicate schemes which brought you the greatest wealth?"

"Strictly between ourselves, Smythe, I don't mind saying that there is not such a big profit in monopolies as most people imagine. The side expenses are enormous—simply enormous."

"I presume so. Legislation is expensive, and votes"—

"Pshaw! Some more newspaper foolish-

ness. Have a cigar?"

"Thanks. I see your name in connection with all sorts of enterprises."

"Yes, I have capital invested in a great many lines of business. By the bye, what is your own special lay? Strange, but I never have happened to hear you mention it."

The younger man smiled, and said: "I would not wish to seem impertinent, Mr. Carnwood, but really, you simply wasted money on that private detective."

"Bless you!" laughed the elder good-naturedly. "Don't imagine for a moment that I mind being discovered in a little thing like that. You were too smart for the fellow, and I admire your acumen. That is all. So here I come, open and aboveboard, to ask the question pointblank. Perhaps I should have adopted this course at the very first, but you were so confoundedly mysterious that the thing piqued me. You know why I am interested. It is for my daughter's sake. You two appear to like one another's company fairly well. Now I put it to you, honestly and truly, should a father allow his only child—a girl who will some day inherit one of the great American fortunes—should he allow her to become too deeply interested in a young man without looking up that young man's antecedents and condition, in order to be satisfied that he is—er—suitable? Look here, Smyl we've all got way past the age of nonsense *trouble that the fiction writers seem to believe*

is still the mainspring of our lives. Three-quarters of such books are filled with rich parents trying to prevent their daughter's marriage to a poor man. I don't believe that is in accordance with good common sense. Maybe there are a few wealthy people who retain such ideas, but they're growing scarcer all the time. I'm as rich as any but Mary shall wed whom she pleases. Good Lord! Won't she have enough and to spare for both? My personal preference and, I think, that of most rich fathers, would be for some fellow with brains and no money. He could appreciate the full value of wealth, and know how to use it to good advantage. But anyway, even if my girl should pick out a well-to-do idiot, they'd have hard work to squander all I expect to leave them in one lifetime."

The other puffed thoughtfully upon his cigar for a few seconds, and then said: "Mr. Carnwood, I love your daughter, and, moreover, believe that I am not distasteful to her. But you must realize that a young man does not wish to undergo even the suspicion of being a fortune-hunter. I have vowed never to ask Mary to be my wife, until I have at least one million dollars. Such a sum is a small matter to you, I know, but still it would"——

"Go ahead, my boy, I admire your sentiments," interrupted the other blandly. "Good luck to you in your endeavors. But where is *the answer* concerning my main question, as to



the nature of your present business? A man who seeks to acquire even a single million of dollars in these competitive days, must put forth no small amount of energy and talent along his chosen lines. Come, I'll make you a strictly businesslike proposition. The card handed my detective stated that you were an 'investigator.' What will be your charge to report to me at once, the results of a personal investigation into the affairs of Phidias Rowell Smythe?"

"Myself?"

"Exactly."

"I have a rule—No. Rules are only logical when they can be broken under certain circumstances. The present appears to be a case in point. My fee will be—one thousand dollars, Mr. Carnwood."

"Give me a pen and I'll write you out a check."

As soon as the magnate had completed his small task the young man took the slip of paper, examined signature and writing very carefully, and after placing it in a wallet, said: "You now become entitled to a full and complete account of my affairs."

"Just what I want."

"It is understood that my communications will be absolutely confidential?"

"Most certainly."

"In the first place then, until you paid me *this* fee the exact amount of cash I had in *hand* was twenty-seven cents."

"I have been temporarily pinched in earlier days myself. But there must be several hundred dollars worth of stuff here. You could easily borrow something on it, enough to tide you over. Besides, there are other assets, the jewelry you wear and that handsome watch at which you have just looked."

"When I first came to New York," went on Smythe reminiscently, "I had only a ten dollar bill. But I was well-dressed and had a good appearance. This aided me in renting luxurious bachelor apartments uptown. These, in turn, gave me credit with tailors, jewelers, and other tradesmen. With this start, as it were, it was quite practical to lease an office and secure furniture on easy terms. Once such a ball is actually got rolling there is no limit to temporary possibilities. I might have had a steam yacht, a stable, and other such things—and sunk out of sight when the time came to make some payments, as many another fellow has done. But I managed to restrain myself. I plunged, to be sure, but not over my head; only to a depth where moderate sums of money at fair intervals would keep me afloat indefinitely. At some time or another in my career I have paid tradesmen's bills, rent, club dues, and the like. In consequence, although my debts are considerable, my credit remains unimpaired. It is not difficult for a young man in my position to easily pick up five times the yearly income of a *hard-working clerk*. Of course such a sum will no

cover my expenditures, but, nevertheless, this ready cash serves for partial payments, pocket-money and so forth."

"You say that it is easy to pick up five times the yearly income of a hardworking clerk. I don't see how."

"Why, my dear sir, is it really a fact that you are uninformed upon such a well-known subject? There are scores of our mutual friends engaged in this sort of thing, although as a general rule they do it to eke out a limited personal income. I could give you any number of illustrations but one will suffice. Can you recall my going into raptures over a certain new brand of champagne, some few months back?"

"Yes, and after I ordered a lot of the stuff I noticed that you never touched it—at least at my table."

"Precisely. That champagne rather nauseates me, although others like it. I really did think it fairly good at the time I spoke. However, that matters little. If Jerome B. Carnwood, the multi-millionaire, buys it (of course, he is not compelled to drink it) many would-be imitators follow suit; and the gratified proprietors of the label show their appreciation of my thoughtfulness by sending me an occasional honorarium in the shape of a check. As I said before, I could give you any number of illustrations in various lines; but I think with this *example, you can appreciate the possibilities throughout my numerous circle of wealthy*

friends and acquaintances. Yet even in this thing I try to be moderate. Many of my compatriots lose all by being too grasping. I merely take the trouble to pick up enough in this way to keep my pot boiling along."

"And this is your business?"

"No, no. Not at all. Merely a side issue. It would be well-nigh impossible to gain my coveted million in such fashion. If I were to make a written exhibit I could show that the figured cost of maintaining my wealthy connection is in excess of actual receipts from the sources I have described. No real profit in it, you see. The returns merely enable me to keep a credit rating. Before explaining my particular business, I thought it only fair and necessary to give you an idea of the causes leading up to it. Now, may I ask your late impressions regarding myself?"

"I imagined you to be a young man of some small fortune, with a regular though perhaps limited income."

"Exactly. So does everybody else. This reputation aids me materially. I frequently have to finance. Last week I borrowed ten thousand dollars from our mutual friend Rodengeld upon a simple I. O. U."

"I would have loaned you that amount and more—then."

"But not now, when you know the real state of my affairs, eh?" cried the young man laughingly. "Well, I don't blame you. That's one *reason why I charged a fee for this confidential*

revelation. Nevertheless, I paid Rodengeld back in full, the first thing this morning."

"And left yourself with twenty-seven cents."

"It is the fortune of war. I might have had my million. My business capital has at times been over twenty thousand dollars. It is now one thousand dollars and twenty-seven cents."

"That seems to me very much like going backwards. I have always added to my capital, never materially lessened it."

"You have been wonderfully fortunate. But, in spite of this retrogressive appearance, I feel the million to be sure within a reasonable period, and that is all for which I am striving. Let me now explain my method of operations."

"You have made me eager to hear it."

"Briefly stated, my business is everybody's business. In other words, instead of following out the old motto of attending strictly to one's own concerns, I make it my object to go to the very opposite extreme. The card your detective procured from me had the word 'investigator' beneath my name. This is really correct, but I give that pasteboard to very few. I have any number of other cards. Here, for instance, is a whole assortment with nearly all lines, from the baker to the candlestick-maker inscribed beneath my own and other names. I have disguises to suit them. My office hours are devoted to studying newspapers and reference books, trying all manner of things which will come in handy under certain conditions and otherwise possessing myself of know

the most diverse and odd. At regular intervals I sally forth, take up a clue, no matter how trivial, and follow it out to some kind of an end. You would be astonished to know how often these lead to money-making in greater or less degree, not to speak of adventure and romance. Of course, my unique knowledge and past experiences enable me to benefit by little things which the ordinary observer would scarcely note. Moreover, I have formulated a code of axioms or rules, which have long ago demonstrated their practical value."

"Am I to understand that you think it is possible to gain a million dollars in such idle fashion?" demanded the elder, in tones of wonderment.

"I have not the slightest doubt of it," replied Smythe calmly. "In fact, I could have already possessed that sum several times over if I had cared to use dishonest means."

"Humph! This grows interesting. Can you not give me an example of such an adventure?"

"Most certainly, but it must be a short and, consequently, a minor one; for I know that your time is precious. I could fill a dozen books with these investigations of mine, and I don't believe there would be many pages of dryer reading than ordinary, in the whole. However, let me see, perhaps that nail-mark affair would be brief enough and more or less interesting as concerning your box of unmounted diamonds."

"*Thunder and Morristown!* How came you

to know anything about my unmounted diamonds? Ah-ha! Perhaps you are the anonymous correspondent who bade me to seek a more secure hiding place for the box?"

"I am, and I trust you followed the advice?"

"Yes, but how"—

"It was lucky you did, for another attempt upon them might have been more successful. Pardon my curiosity, but it seems strange to me that you should have taken such slight pains for the security of unmounted jewels—the easiest of any kind of portable property to quickly and unsuspectedly realize money upon—worth something in the neighborhood of half a million dollars. I can understand the idea in having them. You wish to keep a good anchor out to windward in case of the unexpected happening, as it were. But why you should put them in a place so easy come upon by inquisitive searchers, is way beyond me."

"Well, I reasoned that safes could, and most likely would, be broken open; but that a mere box with a common lock, standing upon one of the library shelves, was apt to be entirely overlooked. However, I have changed my mind since, and—the diamonds are safe for the present. But why do you call it the nail-mark affair?"

"I have a habit of remembering these little matters by the title of my first clue. In this case I was in a drugstore looking up somebody's address in the public directory, when I *happened* to come across the name of Jerome

B. Carnwood. Of course, being intimate with you, it momentarily arrested my attention. In that second of time I noticed the mark of a finger nail drawn directly underneath and guiding over to the street and number of your city dwelling; as if some rather uncertain reader had wanted to make no mistake about the matter. Moreover, the mark was undoubtedly a very recent one, as the fibres of the paper had not sprung back appreciably. Here was an interesting clue for me to follow up."

"Clue? By all the doctrines of chance, it was a mere nothing!"

"Just so, but it is astonishing how even such erudite things as doctrines occasionally amount to little. It turned out so in the present case, at any rate."

"But I don't see where you could begin?"

"Simple, very simple. A dozen different methods. Luckily for my brain tissue, however, the very first trial put me on a warm scent. I took a hansom, and bribing the driver to make his best speed, went to call upon your daughter, meaning to stay as long as I dared and afterwards to drop in at the Hazzenbach's, next door. Both of your reception rooms have a good view of the street. Scarcely had I entered your house and begun conversing with Miss Mary, when I noted a dapper-looking fellow, strolling along the near sidewalk, evidently watching for something out of one corner of his eye. When but a few houses away, his *head commenced to bob slowly up and down.*



There could be no doubt about what he was doing. In looking for a given street number most people are apt to become impatient and count ahead of them. A satisfied smirk came over the man's face as his glance rested for a second upon your portico. He at once stepped out more briskly. To my astonishment he seemed to wink at me in passing. But I argued that, in such a light, I must be invisible from his point of view. Then I remembered noticing one of the footmen standing in the main entrance as I came up the steps. That explained matters. The wink was intended as a reassuring signal to the manservant. Evidently some communication had already taken place between them. Hastily excusing myself, I left your house and followed the stranger at a good distance. He soon entered a restaurant, notorious for its choice viands and slow service. Nothing could have suited better. I took a cab to my quarters, rigged out in an entirely different style of dress, with darkened eye-brows and other slight disguise, and was back again in the neighborhood, long before his meal was finished. Upon coming out he scarcely wasted a look in my direction, although I clambered aboard of the same car with him. To be brief, I followed the man to a carpenter shop, and, after waiting round outside of the last named place for a few minutes, to a flat-building. I managed it so as to be just passing the stoop as he pushed the electric button, and after he had *gone in*, came back and looked at the cor-

sponding name-plate. It was 'Holden,' third floor, rear. I rang the janitor's bell and was soon in conversation with the genial Irishman. He had no rear apartments vacant at the moment. There was one family temporary. He thought I might get that flat on the first of next month. I mumbled something about the Holdens. Those were the people he meant. Large flat? No, but suitable for small family. Two bed-rooms only. There were six of the Holdens, but they crowded in somehow. They didn't amount to much when all was said and done. I ventured to ask if the dark-complexioned man was really Mr. Holden? No, no, Holden was light with red hair. That dark complexioned one is a brother-in-law, they say. His name is Schrieber. It was a nice flat. I should think about it. Seemed to be a pleasant location. And so on. Having found out all I wanted here, I next proceeded to the carpenter shop in the side street, into which I had seen my man go, and outside of which I had waited for him. Directly in front of me as I entered was a wooden box with the name 'Schrieber' scribbled upon it in pencil. A journeyman was sandpapering one of its sides and had a pot of varnish with a brush laid across the top, standing conveniently near. The foreman was gruff but I secured an estimate upon a mythical lot of store shelving. By this time the name had been erased from the side of the box and the whole was being varnished. I have a pretty *good eye for measurements*—this faculty saved

my life in the abracadabra affair—and I hastened away to another carpenter shop and ordered a box to be constructed just like the one I had seen. I agreed to pay double if it was ready with varnish dry in six hours.”

“Did you know anything about my box of diamonds, at this time?”

“No.”

“Then why, upon such slender supposition, did you take the trouble to have a box manufactured, even if this man Schrieber had done so?”

“Among my self-formulated working axioms is one that compels me to immediately furnish myself with duplicates of any extraordinary supplies possessed by those I am investigating. Quite often this turns out to be useless, but in the majority of cases, as I have satisfied myself, it is more or less of an aid to success. In one of my very first investigations I lost a fortune by not at once duplicating a large balloon. However, to keep to the strict lines of my present narrative, I had my box complete at about the same time as Schrieber’s, allowing for the extra hour or so it took the carelessly varnished one to dry. Then for two or three days, disguised as a typical young man of the working class, I hung about the neighborhood of the flat building occupied by the Holdens. In this time I found out a great deal which helped me in what followed. Among many other things *too numerous* for mention, I managed to over-*hear Schrieber* talking to an acquaintance, and

le up my mind that his voice was easy of  
ation. Also, I had a lively flirtation with  
y Holden, a cherry-lipped girl, who seemed  
o all the family marketing. There was  
ing particularly shy about Kitty. She  
ed at me quite openly in passing,  
we were soon on speaking terms. The  
was as sharp as a steel trap and might  
e bothered me considerably, but the  
ation served as a good excuse for  
ching her closely, and made Kitty un-  
icious of any other purpose. On the  
ning of the second day Schrieber came  
g the street and entered the flat building.  
had a squarish paper parcel under his arm.  
was corded and tied with a slip-knot. I  
ssed what it was at once: the varnished  
wrapped up, in order to hide it from pry-  
eyes. Five minutes later Kitty emerged.  
I followed her to an adjacent bird shop.  
came out of this place with a bag of some-  
g, rather heavy, under her arm. I did the  
ant and she made no objection to my car-  
g it for her, as far as the stoop of the flat-  
ling. In that time I easily found out that  
contents consisted of small gravel, such as  
sed in aquariums. Inside of half an hour I  
filling my own duplicate box with a similar  
ntity and quality of material. By this time  
gan to have some inkling of what was going  
only I imagined it would be a few thousand  
urs worth of odds and ends, instead of a for-  
*in unmounted diamonds. Upon the follow-*

ing morning, Kitty went to a butcher shop and bought three kinds of meat. Steak, that was for dinner; pork chops, supper; sausage where would that come in? Two kinds of meat at one sitting was not the custom, or even exception, among people of the Holden class. For hot sausages and potatoes, around about midnight, after a man had been through some hours of excitement! There was a theory! I made up my mind that a prompt move was in contemplation. About ten o'clock that evening I strolled down the street where you live, made up to look as much as possible like Schrieber and with my gravel-filled wooden box carefully wrapped up in paper and carried beneath my arm. Just as I came in front of your house I saw an identical footman whom I had suspected stepped out to the front of the portico. He coughed—a low nervous cough. I did the same. 'Schrieber?' he called softly. I mumbled something that sounded like anything. Then he drew closer. We were in the shadow. 'You're earlier than I wanted,' he commenced, with his teeth fairly chattering together from excitement. 'Now is as good as any time,' I made reply. 'Have you got the box?' he went on. 'Yes, yes, I see you have. I don't know what makes me shake so. Must be a chill. Is the paper tied with a slip-knot so that I can make the exchange quickly?' I reassured him at this point. 'Well, give it to me,' he said, with a great sigh. 'I'm not used to this sort of thing. I'm pretty nearly out of my head—'

fright. I'll acknowledge that I ain't no cracksman.' I cut him short in gruff tones, for time was passing, and said: 'See here now, no foolishness. You've been swilling down drink to keep your nerve up, and instead of making you brisk it has done a lot of harm. I want you to pay particular attention to what I say. I got a box made as near like your description as possible, but we must not be too sure about it. I've improved on our plan a trifle. You take this box and exchange it for the real one. I'll carry that away, empty it in a good safe place close by here, and return with it. You make another exchange and give me this fake box. Then we have the real box back again in its place, empty; and no chance for the detectives to go browsing around carpenter shops. Do you understand?'— 'Yes, yes,' the trembling fellow assented, 'that's all right.' Then he took my box and hurried into the house. I waited until he came out. A few minutes later I was walking away from your residence with the real box, tied up in my piece of wrapping paper, under my arm."

"And you mean to say that you actually had my diamonds in your possession?" howled Mr. Carnwood, in astonishment.

"Yes, but not for very long. Listen. I hurried away to a private room in a building near at hand. This I had previously arranged for. I had just time enough to examine the contents of the box (you can open a common lock like *that with almost anything*) and realize the for-

tune which I could have kept for myself, without anybody being the wiser. Fixing it up again as before, wrapped in the paper and tied in a slip-knot with string, I went back to your neighborhood and managed so well as to shelter myself in a dark corner of the areaway. Pretty soon the real Schrieber came along. The footman again emerged, apparently more scared than ever, and not giving the sneak-thief time to say anything, took his box and quickly brought out mine. Schrieber at once hastened away with it—Now came the hardest part of all. I watched my chance to steal off a little distance, and came back along the sidewalk again. But I nearly coughed myself hoarse before I got an answer. 'What's the matter?' whined the reluctant footman, who at length crept forth. 'What do you mean by all this coming and going? You've made bustle enough around here to rouse the whole neighborhood. We'll be caught as sure as fate. And you've still got the box with you,' he gasped pointing towards the parcel amazedly. 'You might as well'—'Shut up!' I interrupted unceremoniously. 'You've been drinking since I left you.' 'Yes, I have, and I won't deny it' the fellow doggedly replied; 'and who wouldn't try to brace himself up with all this box exchanging. It's easy for you to stand out here and order; but'—'Didn't I say that I was going to bring the real box back for you to replace after I had emptied it?' I put in. 'Yes, and you've done that, and here you are again with

the fake one,' said the distracted man angrily. 'Nonsense,' I interposed. 'You're a poor chap for this kind of work. Lucky it is that you had me to help. I have not been back since the first time. You've only imagined it. You've been drinking so much, and you're so nervous and white-livered that you can imagine almost anything. Here, take this box in, and bring out the other. Then we'll be straight, just as I told you'—The look on the man's face was really pitiable, but he swallowed my statement against his own better judgment. And so, your own box with all the diamonds untouched, went back to its original place, and Schrieber and I merely made an exchange of our fake ones, containing the aquarium gravel."

There was a short pause. Mr. Carnwood leaned back, and gazed open-mouthed upon the young man.

"As I said at first," resumed Smythe, when he perceived that the listener had no comment to make at the moment, "this nail-mark affair was simple and trifling alongside many of my other investigations. But it will, perhaps, give you some conception of the possibilities in my profession, without taking up as much time as the narration of an affair of a more elaborate nature."

"You—you are cut out for a detective, and a mighty successful one, too," ejaculated the magnate admiringly.

"No, no," returned the other hastily, "*my genius cannot work successfully in that direc-*



tion. Many of my investigations have nothing whatsoever to do with crime or projected criminal acts. Even in the instance I have just given, I prevented a crime being committed. A detective would have commenced work later on and merely sought out the malefactors for punishment."

"But I cannot see where you made any money on this transaction. You certainly never claimed any reward from me. You must even have been out expenses, let alone time."

"Exactly so, but while working on the nail-mark case I accidentally hit upon some information in another matter, which resulted in the division of seven thousand dollars between two brokers and myself. In this, you may find the key-note of my chosen profession. In meddling with the affairs of everybody else, I frequently light upon chances for good profit. And this most often happens in the least likely ways. I have learned by experience not to despise the slightest opening, no matter how apparently puerile and absurd. For instance, last evening while prowling along in the tenement district, I witnessed an accident. A wretchedly clad man had been run over by a motor car. In the bustle of excitement attendant upon the arrival of the ambulance to take him away, I managed to slip one of my numerous business cards in his pocket. Now you may say that the chances are millions in favor of nothing coming from such a trifling move. And yet, one of my best paying cases so far,

was from something even less tangible. But I have no desire to bore you too much. Merely wish to perform my part of our bargain in a thorough manner. Have I made myself sufficiently plain?"

"Yes, indeed, and it has all been most interesting. Worth the fee many times over. Er—The reason I compared you to a successful detective a few minutes ago, was with the idea that you might be extremely valuable to me in many ways. I could"—

"Pardon me, Mr. Carnwood," interrupted the young man. "I thank you for the intention and offer, but you must understand that among my self-learned maxims is one that forbids me to work, except from chance clues. To take up something on order and endeavor to trace it through would come under the forbidden category. That is purely detective work, for which as I have said, I can claim no special aptitude."

"I'm sorry," mused the elder man, while a rather puzzled expression came over his face. "I have been informed by—er—a newspaper fellow—er—Chauncey—Malone—"

"Maguire? Chauncey Maguire?"

"Yes, I believe that is his name. Is he reliable?"

"I can't say. Never met him."

"But you seem to know of him?"

"Yes. These newspaper fellows are into everything and this Maguire seems to be especially *indefatigable*. I often come across his *trail*, as it were, in my own investigations. But

don't let me interrupt what you were saying?"

"Oh, what he told me? Well, I make it a point to keep in with all these journalists, big or little. Not that I care what they may write about me, but—er—it's a matter of policy. I am frequently able to oblige, by giving them news tips, and, more often, receive valuable information. Strange, what really smart fellows most of them are. If they would only put forth the same amount of energy and skill in ordinary commercial fields, they could make a hundred times as much money. However, as I was saying, this man, Chauncey Maguire is one of my—er—protéges. I met him this morning, on the street, just before I came in here. He says that there is something going on among the poorer socialists, anarchists, and others; but just what it is he seems to be unable to determine. You, I have no doubt would find this the simplest kind of a nut to crack. It is a fad of mine, in which I differ from most of the wealthier men, to keep a watch upon the likely movements of the masses. Of course, I do not look for any particular revolution or uprising. Such a thing, in view of their complete lack of organization and leaders, is most unlikely; but, even as you have proved by your own theories, one never can tell what may happen. But, bless me! Time has galloped away unnoticed in listening to your story. I am long since due at a directors' meeting, which I had promised to attend."

"That means, if the rumor of your delay has

gone forth, which is very likely, a flurry on 'Change," replied Smythe coolly. "In other words, fortunes have been made or lost while we were talking."

"I have no doubt of it, my boy," said Mr. Carnwood, striding vigorously towards the door; "but so far as I am personally concerned, I am willing to cheerfully accept the probable shrinkage in the value of my holdings. They will come round all right. And this interview has relieved my mind from one of its greatest recent worriments. We understand one another now. Win your own million if you can. My daughter shall have her choice in any event. Good day!"

No sooner had the door closed upon the magnate than Smythe resumed his seat, and returned to the nail hammering, watch timing, and memorandum making in a perfectly businesslike fashion.

## CHAPTER II.

### A GENIUS AND A PHENOMENON.

Chauncey Maguire was an itinerant newspaper worker and a living example of the failure of misdirected efforts. Endowed by nature with great gifts, he seemed to be unable to make proper use of them. He was such a bright fellow that he could do almost anything, but his temperament was so active that he *wanted to do everything*. He never had pa-

tience enough for more than one success in a given line. Moreover, he was so thoughtlessly generous that he allowed others to defraud him of his rightful rewards, without so much as appearing to notice their infamy. Such a character quite naturally gravitated towards the maelstrom of journalistic work. Buffeted about between editors, who tire much more quickly than the average child of their toys, he led a life of constant variety and change. He was too versatile to be a financial success in this field of limited money-making opportunities. A good editorial writer, a specialist on politics or horse racing, even a reliable hack, has a chance for permanent employment in journalism. But one who is capable of doing the work of all the above given examples and others as well, has too much petty jealousy and back-stair wire-pulling to contend against. Maguire occasionally had a pocket full of money, but for the most part lived from hand to mouth. Such a nature as his was incapable of putting anything aside for a "rainy day."

In one of his newspaper assignments he had come across a more than ordinarily destitute family. He supplied their pressing wants at his own charge. Moreover, he would not shift the responsibility of procuring medical assistance to others, but himself hunted up a doctor. This took time. His sheet was "scooped" on a certain story, and Maguire's name was promptly blacklisted by his skipper. Within forty-eight hours the newspaperman was in almost as

pitiable a condition as the family he had so recently relieved. Strolling aimlessly up the Bowery, frightfully hungry but unwilling to make the sacrifice of his good clothes (important keys to the next editorial pay-roll) for his stomach's sake, he almost ran into a shabbily attired individual.

"Want the whole sidewalk?" ironically demanded the reporter, his usual sunny disposition sadly marred by the enforced abstinence from things edible.

"No, I"—began the other apologetically, and then stopped to gaze inquisitively at the fault-finder.

"Look hard!" ejaculated Maguire. "You may want to know me again."

"I saw you in the grocery store, buying things for that O'Brien family," calmly remarked the gazer.

"Well, and what of it?" demanded the newspaperman angrily. "*You* can't discharge me, if I choose to amuse myself in that foolish fashion."

A light came into the eyes of the other. His clawlike hands went up and down the seams of his coat.

"Say!" he remarked hastily. "You've dropped something."

Maguire's eyes followed the pointing finger and he saw a dirty one dollar bill at his feet. Quick as a flash he picked it up. Then his face *turned a bright crimson*.

"Look here! You can't play any of your damned tricks on me," he cried, starting forward and grasping hold of the other's shrinking form. "I'm no street beggar."

"You can pay back when able, can't you? It is only a loan," pleaded the guilty donor, struggling to release himself.

"What is your name and where do you hang out?" demanded Maguire bitterly.

"My name is Ludovic Zam. I live in the same tenement as that O'Brien family. Just overhead. Really and truly. Don't stop a fellow now. You'll make me late for work."

The newspaperman gulped down a sob.

"Thank you," was all he could say.

The shabbily dressed one sped off.

The improvident Maguire had a good dinner, a good cigar, and a good shine to his shoes, inside of an hour. In two, at the most, he slid into another temporary sort of position, with a new editor who lacked brains but had the more important faculty of impressing others. The little loan was duly repaid, and a strange friendship was thus cemented between individuals of such diverse walks in life. Chauncey Maguire, of course, took more pains to make himself agreeable to this nondescript than he would have done with the managing editor of the greatest newspaper in the city. Moreover, he became deeply interested in the originality of Ludovic Zam and took the trouble to write out *an utterly unsalable account of his personality. It is only fair to Maguire to state that we*

are indebted to this manuscript for most of the details given below.

The exact birthplace of Ludovic Zam is not known. His parentage must remain an equal mystery. Lone orphans of the city's wretched poor cannot expect to have a genealogical tree supplied them. When he had arrived at manhood's estate his voice still offered a slight suggestion of the Irish brogue. This, however, may well have been acquired in childhood from the matron at the orphan asylum. Even his name is no particular indication of nationality. It was merely one he had chosen for himself, after trying various others for longer or shorter terms. In appearance, he was cosmopolitan. One could distinguish traits of various European races in him. We must remain satisfied with this raw account of his nativity, for the simple reason that there is no more to give.

Ludovic Zam was a tailor. Not such a one as vaunt their titles upon gaudy sign-boards and ornate store fronts. Ludovic made clothes. With a score of others like himself, he spent an average of sixteen hours a day in a foul smelling tenement room. There, with sewing machines huddled close together, they worked incessantly with feet, hands, brain, and eyes, in the endeavor to earn a living wage. Great bundles of cut cloth were continually being brought into the room. The mute machines, under the guidance of the workers, quickly transformed this raw material into fashionable *wearing apparel*. Evening dress, jaunty golf



suits, sack coats, and the other varieties, were continually passing through their hands. Ludovic and his companions wore such clothing as a provident laborer's wife exchanges for tinware with the rag peddler. On Sundays, except when trade was rushing, the sewing machines stood idle and the tailors had a rest. Most of them regarded this as a deep laid plan to prevent the earning of a little more money. Not so Ludovic. He had an ambition which required every second of time that he could spare from bread-struggling. To better the lot of the poorer classes, was his one object in life. This inspiration had come to him while he was young and impressionable. In the course of years it had engrafted itself upon his very soul, until everything else seemed a minor matter. Most of his companions laughed to scorn the crude theories which he, from time to time, put forward. This, however, was entirely without effect upon him. His studies had early impressed him with the thankless lot of reformers, ancient and modern. It might be interesting to trace his evolution, step by step, but we must content ourselves with only the broadest details leading up to his final scheme.

Ludovic possessed an astonishing education. He had swallowed the opportunities offered in his early schooling, with all the eagerness of a starved being. The cast-off book junk, sent by charitable persons to the asylum, was a vein of literary wealth to him. As a youth, when

he first went to work in carrying the bundles of cloth and clothing, backward and forward between the squalid work shops and the spacious counting rooms, he often did without his poor meals in order to buy a cheap second-hand book. Once or twice he stole volumes from off a street stand when the proprietor happened to be unobservant. This, however, was before his morality became fixed. As he grew up he used the public libraries, so far as his confining hours and the scant courtesy of attendants to a disreputable applicant would permit. Castaway newspapers, patent medicine almanacs, and conversations with anybody who would talk to him, also contributed to his knowledge. He was omnivorous in learning, and forgot no single thing that came his way. He found out the least amount of sleep that could possibly suffice. He worked (as told before) an average of sixteen hours a day, studied six, and slept two. His sharp teeth tore away at the dry loaf of bread, without diverting his eyes from the printed page. As he walked to and from the work room he studied passing men, store windows, signs, and what not. In addition to a splendid memory, Ludovic Zam possessed that Heaven-sent gift of quick assimilation. His mental digestion was abnormal. As a single instance out of many, he devoured a chess manual in a single holiday Sunday. Without board or men, solely by the aid of the infrequent explanatory *diagrams*, he absorbed the bulk of the expert

author's knowledge of this intricate game. In a single sitting he acquired that which a large majority of mankind can never attain to in a whole lifetime. Ludovic's precociousness along other lines was just as remarkable.

His fellows took it ill that he remained unmarried. Most of them supported a wife and several children upon the same wages that he received. That is to say, they and their families kept starvation at bay and lived in squalor unspeakable, upon the scant proceeds of their killing labors. These men supposed that Ludovic must be saving money. As a matter of fact, the few coins accumulated were being continually dispersed for old books, as well as in modestly aiding the unfortunate. This latter, was in a way following out the lines of his ambition. But the results were as nothing. He soon realized that even great fortunes used in such manner, could have no permanent benefit. Nevertheless, tho' distress was all about him he could not get hardened to it, and gave even when he had nothing for himself. Oftentimes, too, the very people whose necessities he had relieved, turned bitterly upon him. Charity may bless the giver, but it rarely works out that way with the recipient. There are two, or more, sides to everything.

As Ludovic approached years of discretion he had his love affair. In such conventional fashion was his education fully rounded out. *His* was a nature that absolutely longed for *connubiality*. And yet he put it from him.

"What can I offer her," he said to himself, when coming to the decision which made all look dark before him. "A few years of our life and the beauty will have fled from her face, the happiness from her voice, and the health from her body. To be sure, her die is cast. Her fate must be such with somebody—unless she chooses a brief term of gilded shame."

A year or two later, when he saw her the bruised and beaten wife of a drunken loafer, his conscience pricked him while his heart bled. However, neither the wretched mother nor her puny children went hungry while Ludovic could help them. This, at least, for a time. The whirlpool of ejections for non-payment of rent, drunkenness, and misery, at length swept the wretched family away from him completely. Try as he might, Ludovic could never again come upon them. The dearly loved sweetheart of his youth, as well as she whose image was with him to the last, in such fashion disappeared from his knowledge forever.

And so we find Ludovic Zam in early manhood, of meagre body but well stored mind. To be sure much of this knowledge was ill-balanced and he entirely lacked many commonplaces; but, take him all in all, the sum of his acquirements was a large one. A college professor, a learned man of world-wide reputation, while upon a "slumming" expedition, encountered this prodigy and after much interesting conversation was led to cross question him.

"What languages have you at fair command?" inquired the pedagogue.

"Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, German, Gaelic, Hebrew, and English," replied Ludovic.

"Why Gaelic and not French?" asked the professor wonderingly.

"That, and others, will come later," answered the tailor composedly.

"Mathematics?"

"Arithmetic, geometry, and trigonometry, as far as I have found books to carry me."

"No algebra?"

"Not yet."

"But the study of it would help you with the others."

"I prefer to take one thing at a time and conquer it thoroughly."

"Geography, botany, physics, physiology, geology,"—

"All you have mentioned so far, except the first," interrupted the tailor.

"Do you mean to say that you know nothing concerning the countries of the world?" queried the professor amazedly.

"Only so much as chance statements in other books have enlightened me," assented Ludovic.

"This is truly monstrous. How comes it?"

"I have not been able to find a good geography at a cheap enough price; and, moreover, there are many other things of greater present interest to me," explained the self-learned student.

"Nonsense!" cried the excited pedagogue.  
"*The idea of a man of your attainments being*

practically ignorant in regard to a subject in which little school children are proficient. You shall have the best books on geography that money will buy, as soon as I can send them."

The professor interrogated at great length and departed much impressed.

"This man," he said to his companions in the luxurious livery cab, as they rolled back to the hotel, "has a clearer perception of many things than I have. I could learn from him. Nevertheless, he needs a good deal more study. For instance, I doubt much if he could, without preliminary coaching, pass the trifling entrance examination at our college."

"And where would he be on track athletics?" laughingly queried the brawny young fellow beside him.

But the memory of the poor penned up creatures they had been among, was too vivid by its recentness; and they gazed at one another silently for the rest of the ride.

Of course, Ludovic Zam was not thus storing his mind with rich knowledge out of pure aimlessness. He first sought to become an orator.

"I will follow the examples set by the greatest reformers of Greece and Rome," he reasoned to himself. "The powers of eloquence will enable me to move men's thoughts. I will address audiences upon the streets, in the public squares, wherever and whenever I can. Each convert gained will be a force in the right direction, I will lay before the public facts, fig-

ures and examples, which heretofore have received no proper attention. Moreover, with the added vigor of true oratory, I shall be able to impress the minds of my listeners and set them on to action. The classes shall be made to realize the downtrodden condition of the masses. The lawmakers shall be forced to give their attention to social problems, which may be solved in some fashion or other, if anarchy and a reign of terror is to be averted."

Such is a brief synopsis of the reflections of the meanly appearing tailor, as he steadily fed the raw cloth to his machine and fashioned rich garments for more fortunate human brothers.

Ludovic Zam, when he had finally decided upon the thing, added new features to his efforts. Oratory could not be wholly acquired by study. Text books might furnish theories and rules, but example and personal practice was absolutely necessary. Upon the Sundays which came as holidays, he went about diligently to churches, agnostic lectures, and other free discourses. He rehearsed continually at home and abroad. He became an object of suspicion to the policeman on the beat, by reason of his mumbled speeches and explanatory gestures while walking to and from the daily labor. His neighbors and companions jeered him continually, while this special study lasted. For, sad to say, it came to an end without the expected result. A certain fine dust raised from the cloth over which he worked so many

took its effect upon him at this unfortunate time. He had suffered, like his fellow-workers, from the same thing before; but it now became chronic and violent. His throat was so bad, that for days and weeks, he could not talk above a whisper. This was a poor sign. The tailors considered that a man so attacked could scarcely last much more than a couple of years longer.

Ludovic well knew that an orator without a voice which could be depended upon, was hopeless.

"Let it pass," he thought resignedly. "Some-day I may be better and little practice will then equip me for the actual work. Meanwhile, there are other openings. I will be a writer. If my tongue has failed, my fingers and hands are as strong as ever they were. I will pen upon paper the same thoughts which I purposed telling by word of mouth. Who knows but what they will do even more good in this fashion? I can live on less than ever, and with the money so saved, have my brain thoughts printed upon sheets and given broadcast among the thoughtless crowds."

A few evenings later, while returning from his toil, fatigued and weak from hunger, probably scarcely more than half conscious of what he was actually doing, he slipped and fell. There sounded in his ears the harsh clang of a gong, a shrill scream from the lately giggling work girls, and—next morning, Ludovic Zam recovered consciousness to find himself



in a neat hospital bed, with only bandaged stumps to show where his two hands had been.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE LAST CONVOCATION OF THE ALLIED COUNCILS.

"This meeting will please come to order," announced John Ferguson, at the same time pounding vigorously with his clenched fist, upon the small table.

It was a close, sultry Sunday morning. Every now and again the dull rumble of an approaching thundersquall made itself audible. The place was an East-side dance hall. Tawdry decorations hung about, and the bare floor was littered in places with half-burned cigarettes, wasted edibles, and small details of lost or torn wearing apparel: relics of the noisy assemblage which had dispersed but a few hours previous. The odor of stale beer, tobacco smoke, and other more indescribable things, combined to form an all-pervading scent of no pleasant quality. About one-half of the hall was now occupied by a motley gathering of men. Some were seated on chairs, upturned empty beer kegs, or bottle cases; but the major portion leaned against pillars and wall or stood doggedly upright. John Ferguson was especially favored, in that he had a seat and small table to himself, upon the little band platform.

*This individual, the chairman of the meeting,*

merits a few words of description. He was tall, thin, and narrow-chested, with shoulders stooped and a face of ghastly pallor; an iron-moulder by trade, but had spent the best of his working life in prison. This is not to be wondered at, when his aggressive and stubborn disposition is taken into account. He had made himself a factor in all strikes and labor disturbances, and, moreover, rushing into extremes, had formed dangerous connections with fanatics. In the former position his impulsiveness led him to commit breaches of the law, while in the latter the same failing caused him to dabble with the impotent tools of anarchy. John Ferguson, through his rash advice to striking workmen had brought crime, misery and suffering into countless homes. In spite of all, he continued to wield an important influence among the masses. Perhaps that intangible thing known as personal magnetism, had more than anything else to do with this. When John Ferguson was met with a company of his own class, he invariably became their leader. So it was in Winkleman's Hall, upon this special morning in question.

An impartial onlooker would have understood at a glance, that it was a gathering of no slight moment. These men, disreputable in personal appearance, many of them ill-kept and filthy, formed an assemblage altogether different from any perfunctory committee or chamber. *They absolutely glowed with vigorous thought and purpose.* Divided up into im-

promptu cabals, they exchanged remarks, suggestions, and retorts, one with another, to the accompaniment of active gesticulation and grimace. They were not individually noisy. The outsider would have noted a strange sort of oppression upon them, evidenced in harsh undertones and occasional covert glances from beneath ragged eye-brows. Perhaps the sentinels posted at the doorways, might have explained these guilty actions. This gathering was of a secret nature and the members were desirous of attracting no foreign attention. In a word, they might well be called conspirators. It has been rare indeed, that a secret assemblage of such proportions as this one, whether its individuals were attired in gaudy trappings or patched-up rags, has not made history.

But even their muttered views and low-spoken denunciations resulted in a combined uproar of no mean proportions. John Ferguson had to repeat his announcement and smite the table still more vigorously to enforce proper attention.

"This meeting will please come to order," he again called out.

The buzz of voices died away. There was a faint rustle as bodies adapted themselves to a position of rapt attention. Then came perfect silence—except for the heavy breathing of expectancy.

The chairman rose wearily to his feet, and *with two great tear drops rolling down his cheeks, gazed pitifully upon the eager faces in*

front of him. Then, with an abrupt heave of his shoulders, he spoke:

"Men," he began, in an easy conversational tone, "as you all must realize, this is a most important occasion. Unless something radical can be accomplished it is the last convocation of the Allied Councils. God alone knows the heavy sacrifices of family and individual necessities which you have been compelled to put up with in order to accomplish it. But enough of that. We are here. We have a single hour. I dare not waste an unnecessary second. I have my instructions from your committee. I will give each speaker a reasonable time to exploit any plan which he may have to propose; but I will cut him short, if he delays us. I would remind you that we are like drowning men, about to be torn away from the single float which has hitherto supported. With the last reduction in wages, even the trifling expenses of our organizations become no longer possible. If within this final hour we can decide upon no plan for the practical betterment of our conditions, the millions of underpaid workers whom you represent must inevitably retrograde into the hopeless embrace of complete servitude."

No sooner had he finished speaking than half a dozen in the audience leaped to their feet and demanded recognition.

"One at a time, one at a time, men," remarked the chairman wearily. "Let us first hear *what you have to say*, Murray."

"To attain a certain desired result we must, in the first place, thoroughly appreciate the causes which render such a result necessary," began the individual recognized, in a scholarly address according ill with his mean appearance. "Back of all causes is a primal one. The primal cause of our present misery lies in the fact that we, as a class, are dependant for the livelihood of selves and families upon the receipt of wages. Wages, moreover, are the amounts of compensation for which individuals can be procured to do certain work which nets the procurer or employer a profit. In other words, the worker does not reap the full value of his work. Somebody withholds, keeps, retains, or steals, a portion. The power which enables an employer to legally (which is of course a much different word from rightfully) commit this theft, is called Capital. Without the intervention of Capital the worker could receive full value for the work he performs. In order, then, to secure what we, as workers under the wrongful domination of Capital, wish this interfering power should be abolished. It must be utterly destroyed and its foundations taken away. The foundations of Capital are, of course, the individual ownership of land. From this, and this only, originates wealth—which is another name for Capital. It would be no crime for us to wipe out this individual ownership of land, for it is wrong in itself. How do the owners get this land? Take a capitalist—Jerome B. Carnwood, for instance. He

has recently purchased an enormous country estate from a lot of farmers and others. They bought it from predecessors, who had received it by barter with the Indians. Here is a flaw in the title. These Indians can show no deeds, documents, or legal ordinances giving the land into their possession. Nobody can rightfully sell what they do not own, and moreover, nobody can really own what has been stolen from others. If we go back to Holy Writ we find that this world was given to mankind, all men not a few only, to conquer and enjoy. Where is my proportion of this gift? And yours? And yours?—A comparatively few individuals hold hundreds of thousands of unemployed acres, while the most of us here this morning must trust to organized charity for the very mold heaped upon the dead bodies of our loved ones. I grudge no man as much land as is necessary for his living, but I demand my own right to the same proportion, I"—

John Ferguson raised his hand. Murray stopped abruptly and without remonstrance gave way to the next speaker.

"Sohnbaumer," called the chairman, "you're next, but be brief, man, unless you have something really new to tell us."

"Dot vos de que vestion I asks meinself," cried the Teuton. "Vot is de use of for dat single tax vasting time? Ve vant ackshuns, not vords. Ve are de beeples. De beeples rule dis free gountry, ain'd it? Each vun uf us a vote has. Ve are de vorking glasses. De vorking

glasses are in de majority. Derefore, ledt us, de majority, vote dat all de instruments of broduckshun be gontrolled mit der beeples— Den, instead of vorking to odders rich make, ve vill vork only to subbly our necessary vants. —I make me shoes by hoondreds of bairs, every day in dot factory vhere I vork; yet me und mein family vear out a dozen bairs in a year not. I vill make me shoes, und petter shoes den I make me now, for de farmers dot pring me vegetables, for de putchers dot have meat, for de weavers dot make cloth, und for all de ones dot subbly vot me und mein family need; und even den, vill I half of de year to do nodings but enjoy meinself have. Now, I moost vork dot extra half year to help run a steam poat or to puy champagne for a stock-holder. I nefer have a steam poat or champagne for meinself. Dot is not fair. I vork for dem, and und de udder fellow gets dose tings. If de instruments of broduckshun are”—

Again John Ferguson's hand went up, and the socialist subsided.

“To hell wid all the palaverin and blatherin!” cried O'Donnell, the next one to be recognized by the chair. “Maybe you think that talk will fill the bellies of your childher. Who cares about land value and your bloody instruments of production, and all that rot? If a man hits you, hit him back again, and better than he gave. If a man is grinding you and yours *slowly to death*—kill him and his!—and kill

them quick. If you were not a pack of arrant cowards we could rise and swape the bloody capitalistic scum from off the face of the earth. If you"—

"Silence!" roared John Ferguson, his face all purple from suppressed emotion. "We are but wasting time. Merely going over well threshed grain. Not one of you, so far, has suggested anything practical. Anarchy is a rusty tool of the darkest ages as I have discovered through bitter experience. The single-tax idea may be good, likewise the socialistic, but to be proved they must be enforced, and how is that to be brought about, with all power in the hands of others? We are met here to-day in a last effort to find some practical plan, not to discuss familiar optimistic theories. I confess, for my part, that I see no ray of hope for us. We must expect to live and die under the present frightful conditions. But is there no project, no something that we can labor to bring about towards lightening the chains upon our children's children?"

Just at this moment, when hearts were throbbing and eyes surcharged with moisture at the pathos of the speaker, a fearful laugh echoed throughout the hall. We have called it a laugh, but only for the want of a better word. It was a cackle, a curse, and a shriek, all in one. It came from a puny man, a hunchback, who sat off in a far corner of the hall, all alone. As the audience turned their heads indignantly in *his direction*, he arose and came limping pain-



fully forward. At about the centre of the big apartment he climbed upon a deserted chair, and began to speak. Even as he did so, the place darkened and the threatening squall broke overhead. Lightning flashed blue through the big skylights. Thunder rolled, shaking the rotten foundations of the building. But neither the hunchback nor his audience paid attention to it. The hard, cynical tones of the deformed being, were blood-curdling in their recklessness. His sentences, moreover, were interlarded with frightful profanity and imprecations, which it would do no good to repeat.

"Ye poor, puling contemptible human animals!" he cried. "Your chairman prates of doing something for your children's children. Ah-ha! That made me laugh. Me—Who has so rarely laughed since the day when but a crawling child, I was run over by a careless rich man's carriage."

"Harry, for God's sake keep your senses," cried Ferguson, as another flash showed the hunchback's face drawn in a horrible leer.

"Ha-ha!" shrieked the deformed one, in tones so fierce that they made the weaker men tremble; "you've made me laugh, John Ferguson, and I thank you for that. But your children's children? Know you not that their fate is settled in much the same stern fashion as mine has been? In a matter of a few score **more years** (and that should be in their time) **this earth will be overpopulated.** In 1950 at most,

say statisticians, men will fight for food instead of fame. The weaker races and individuals must starve. Civilization! What a word? And what a poor thing compared with even these echoing electric torches which flash their messages from the unknown. Let your children and their children after them, fight their own battles. They must do it, anyhow. As for you, ye present despicable generation, remain the slaves and serfs that you really are, in spite of the hypocrisy of lying tongues."

"Enough, enough, and more than enough," cried John Ferguson passionately. "Take your seat again, and pray the Almighty for a better faith. We want help, not mocking. The hour is well nigh spent. Only a few moments remain between us and final despair."

At this instant a vagrant ray from the sun pierced the thunder-shattered clouds overhead and poured down into the hall. It wavered, but finally rested, and bathed a single individual of that ragged audience in a flood of golden color. This man was standing upright, his face contorted with emotion. Both of his arms were extended supplicatingly towards John Ferguson. They were only arms. The hands were missing.

"What is it, Ludovic Zam?" called the chairman.

"The tailor cannot talk loud enough for us all to hear," cried a derisive voice in the audience.

"He says he has something to show you," announced one of Ludovic's neighbors.

“Let him come forward then,” commanded John Ferguson impatiently.

Ludovic Zam made his way through the gathering to the little platform and diffidently bowed his head to the presiding officer.

In doing so, he dropped upon the table, from between his teeth, a small slip of paper. It was covered with fine writing.

“I have learned to use one foot to hold a pen after the manner of the hand, but it is very slow,” he huskily murmured.

Without a word John Ferguson took up the document and read it over. At first hurriedly, a second time carefully, and a third time very slowly. The spectators began to show signs of impatience. The chairman took a match from his pocket and lighting it set fire to the slip of paper. He held the latter upon the open palm of his hand until it was entirely consumed. Apparently not content with this, he crumbled the ashes carefully into a fine powder and blew the dust into the air. The whole assemblage had watched his every motion with great eagerness. He now came to the edge of the little platform, and spoke impressively, as follows :

“Our brother has a new and original plan. To even hint at its nature now, would destroy the chances for success. I believe that only the brain that has originated the scheme is capable of carrying it out to a proper completion. *Like every other great thing it calls for a tremendous sacrifice in the beginning. We must*

have a large sum of money—at least two or three thousand dollars!”

A groan of dismay went through the hall.

“I know it seems well nigh impossible to sweat such a sum from people who can barely keep body and soul together under present conditions,” went on the chairman, with a sad smile; “but it simply has to be done. Remember the sacred vows of our organization. Go back to your local circles and announce that the time has arrived to enforce the last clause of our constitution. See that your due proportions are made up and handed to Ludovic, inside of thirty days. Without any negative motion this convocation of the Allied Councils stands adjourned.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### ONE WAY OF RAISING NECESSARY FUNDS.

“The bride wore an exquisite pearl and diamond tiara, a part of the Dempsted family jewels, you know, and her”—“the fellah pwoved to be a fwaud, a meah fwaud.”—“drives like a man. She’s great for the bunkers. The caddies all”—“has given her the residence at Newport and full dower rights, so”—“Good action, but for an all-round hackney, I prefer”—“dearest, sweetest little baby tiger cats you ever”—“read him. I dislike the vulgar conceptions of”—“The honorable member for Missouri did not vote upon”—“always p<sup>r</sup>

a double fee. My symptoms are so mysterious that"—"Met them at Monaco last year. They had a Russian"—"really admire her?"—"calls them"—"gowned in excreable taste."—"but he said that"—This, and its like, was about what the deft-handed serving men heard (if they took the trouble to listen) during the first few courses of the Carnwood dinner party.

The banqueting hall was mainly illuminated by the flashing of cut glass, precious stones, and women's eyes. The massive candelabras scattered along the board, with their sweetly-scented lights carefully subdued within dainty silken shades, merely served to bring out the spotless napery of the table's equipment into glaring prominence; leaving the rich draperies of both apartment and feminine guests, as well as the operations of the attendants, obscured in a certain most refreshing semi-gloom. With the precision of clock-work the courses followed one another, plates and glasses appearing and disappearing with a quietness and regularity that would have seemed remarkable to those unaccustomed to such well-paid dexterity. The actual eating and drinking of the guests was unimportant. Many of the dainties were taken away untouched. The meal was merely an excuse for something else. Most society and all public dinners are of this character. The Carnwood function may be described as one of a series of polite burglaries. *The family were engaged in breaking into So-*

ciety. Having conquered in the financial field, the multi-millionaire was now going through the palpable fiction of being numbered among the elect. Great pains had been taken (by properly remunerated people) to make the present essay in accord with established form. In addition to the conventional food and drink, a live lion was served as a sort of main edible. Living donkeys, bears, swans and a great many other varieties, have been from time to time made the chief item upon the bill of fare of a Society dinner-party; but for a safe, conventional dish, almost sure of being generally relished, a live lion is preferable.

According to the article, carefully padded out for space-rate reasons, by Chauncey Maguire, and published in the journal with which he was then "connected;" "a dinner party of eighteen covers, in honor of Mr. Bengowisko, the celebrated Asiatic explorer, was given at the Carnwood mansion." Mr. Bengowisko, a small, sturdily built man, with clean-shaven face and in immaculate evening dress, offering no special indications of having passed unscathed through countless dangers, sat at the right of his host's fair daughter. This lion roared, after the softened style recommended by the immortal Bottom, at suitable intervals. He was quite charming. Explained so interestingly, without going into unpleasant details. This was all in perfect accord with the usages of cushioned and padded Society. Undoubtedly his publishers and

tour managers had found a treasure. Society, and that, of course, means the great army who merely follow where the bell-wethers lead, delights to hear and reward a man who has skill enough to administer his roarings in a manner "calculated not to offend the most sensitive ear."

But even the wisest and most diplomatic of lions must expect to receive certain comments upon his smothered statements. Alonzo Burnham, a prosperous lawyer, who was no mean portion of the Congress of the United States, even if not exactly in it, appeared to be much shocked at the bribery and corruption, admitted and deferentially acknowledged by the lion to have been necessary in order that he might prowling around some of the temples of Buddha.

"My dear sir," remonstrated the man whose main business consisted in "steering" measures over the shoals of honest legislation at the nation's capital; "I ask you, is this—this, which I might call the subornation of a human brother—is it right? Do you not believe that we, as the superior race, should strive to set a better example to these—these—er—inferior peoples?"

Lion meekly growled his acquiescence to this soft impeachment, in such an appreciative manner as to bring over at least three of the guests who had hitherto been undecided as *to whether or no* they should admit him to *their private menagerie*. Perhaps this conver-

sion was hastened by the radical statements of the next speaker, B. Horatio Dibbs, a popular young broker, who, however, labored under the disadvantage of not being able to shed his Stock Exchange manner with the fall of the president's gavel.

'Same alloverth' world," he rattled out, with a snap of two fingers toward the lion. "Tipping nuisance growing t'b'n 'normousevil. Betahundredt' one 'verybodypresent gives tips? M'st! Can't get waited on 'thout. Presume Asia th' same's here in this r'spect?"

The lion bowed in assent, with a serious expression to his face that was very far from being assumed. Wholesale corrupter of the people's constituents rolled his fat eyes and joined in general deprecation of retail bribery becoming so prevalent.

"And you travel for the pure love of the thing?" queried Mary Carnwood, along about the time when the guests gladly welcomed the sight of the elaborate dessert, with its assurance of an end to the pretence of eating and drinking, and opportunity for undisturbed conversation.

"Why, yes," replied the lion modestly.

One could scarcely blame him for not acknowledging at once, that he made a living, and a very good one, too, by his profession.

"Tell us something more about Asia, Mr. Bengowisko? Now do, please? It is all so interesting," put in a lady of uncertain age *with a languishing glance at the explorer.*



"We caught a glimpse of Japan and China on our trip around the world the year before last, but I was too young to appreciate the sight."

"Funny thwing," chirped Ulysses St. George Fogarty; "wemembah old geogwaphy book at school, Asia colloahed gween on map. Nevaw saw more bwoun looking place in my life. Glad to get away fwom it."

"You have not lived and journeyed through that great continent for years, as I have done," quietly remarked the lion. "Of course I love my native land best of all, but next to it, with me, comes Asia."

"Isn't it just too daintily lovely," bubbled pretty Eunice Von Ruytman. "Horace" (otherwise B. Horatio Dibbs) "and I must certainly go to Japan for our wedding trip. Wouldn't it be nice if we could make up a party and all go together. I have the dearest little Japanese spaniel and I know I should like the people. Isn't there a way to get there by land? I hate travelling on the water. Why, of course there is. How stupid of me. I always keep forgetting that Japan is not surrounded by water. Oh no, I was thinking of Canada. Where is Japan?"

Unofficial member of Congress proceeded to enlighten the young lady and left her with the impression that he himself was densly ignorant on the subject.

"Gad. Just reminds'm," said Dibbs. "We're *getting* very Asiatic now'days. Their stocks *b'n added* to 'r lists. Have 'nother war, lo

s'mother place. Won't b'able t'keep track 'f them all. Might be g'd thing s'm fellow go in fr 'rental specialties. Philipine r'l'wys, Chinese synd'cates, so on. B'lieve g'd thing."

"So do I," remarked Mr. Carnwood complacently. "Buy a couple of hundred shares in that Mud Bath Corporation for my account."

"Booked," exclaimed the stock broker, making two dots and one dask upon his linen cuff with a jeweled pencil.

"How dare you gentlemen intrude your horrid business in our presence," poutingly demanded Horatio's intended bride, at the same time trying to mentally calculate the commissions that her fiancée would receive upon the deal, and to figure out whether it could compass a certain article of jewelry which had been promised her.

Other ladies voiced the same sentiments, but Alonzo Burnham had numerous sterling qualities which endeared him to Society. He opined with a choice roll of his head to include all the feminines present, that the sight of bright eyes and—er—beautiful womanhood undoubtedly aroused the brain of man to its very apogee of power, and hence that—"We don't believe a word you say," "naughty man," etc., interrupted several of the ladies. Strange to relate, the "naughty man" did not blush at his own wickedness; and those who had so boldly declared that they doubted his assertions, *belied* their opinions by taking on an

air of feline gratification. At this point the lion saw fit to purr a little, regarding something supposed to be particularly apropos to the subject. As a matter of fact, it was nothing more than an excuse for some sugar-coated flattery upon his own account.

This little social interlude was all very well in its way, but Mr. Carnwood had his own opinions. Probably the thing did not present itself to him quite so concretely, but, nevertheless, he felt that the lion had not as yet given forth sufficient professional growling. In other and baser words, that the animal had not so far returned full value for money expended or to be expended. Now Mr. Carnwood was always accustomed to getting a good deal more than he paid for, and so proceeded to rectify this slight omission.

"Excuse me, Mr. Bengowisko," broke in the multi-millionaire, from the other end of the table; "but I have been very much interested in what you relate and expect to immensely enjoy your book when it comes out. I'm frank, sir; I was born poor and am proud of it. I've been too much occupied with getting together a little something for my daughter's dower, to have much time for either travel or study. I glanced at an encyclopedia to-day. I find that Asia is credited with having a population of over eight hundred millions, or rather more than all the rest of the world put *together*; and that the great bulk of its people *are barbarians*. Is this really so?"

"It is, and it is not," replied the lion deferentially, in tones loud enough to be heard by all, and in somewhat of an oratorical manner. "To answer the last part of your question first, I would say that the Asiatics are barbarians only from our point of view. They regard us in exactly the same light as we do them, so far as civilization is concerned. The fact is, that the many native tribes composing their broad nationality possess codes of morals and manners entirely different, and very often directly opposing our own. Long before the European savages from which we descend had emerged out of their primitive wildness, Asia and her people possessed scholarship and all that the word implies. This is admitted. My own investigations along the lines of the theories of many noted men, has convinced me that the Chinese, and perhaps the Japanese, were, a couple of thousand years ago, as far ahead of where we are today as we are ahead of them at the present time. After attaining to such an altitude, as it were, they have retrograded. This seemingly sweeping statement is proven to my own satisfaction at least, by the remains of their once voluminous literature; by the countless mysterious ruins and diverted water-courses, whose strange construction and planning leaves their possible uses open to the widest conjecture; and by half a hundred other things, which I will not bore you with. In regard to the present enormous *population of Asia*, I think it is perfectly safe

to say that it is much underestimated. No official census figures from our point of view are available for calculation, except for portions of British India and some small sections of other countries. Even these are admitted to be imperfect, owing to the difficulty of properly enumerating an alien and suspicious race. Moreover, it should be remembered, that in spite of plagues and wholesale slaughterings, the enormous population of Asia increases in a like enormous ratio. The total you found in the encyclopedia may have been reasonable at the time of its publication, but, probably, about eight hundred and seventy-five millions would now be the editor's figure. My own opinion, based upon many comparisons made with the so-called official estimates for individual sections, is that one billion would be much nearer the present population of the whole of Asia."

"Goodness me!" ejaculated Mr. Carnwood.

"Fawncy," croaked Ulysses, "those baw-bawians—er—those Asiatics — exceed— ouah own wace in numbahs!"

"Just as you say, sir," went on the lion un-blushingly, "we civilized people are in a very small minority, when compared with the countless hordes of Asiatics. And this discrepancy becomes still more noticeable when we bring the rest of the world into our calculations. Out of the sixteen or seventeen hundred millions of the earth's present population, *even the widest stretching of what we can con-*

sider real civilization will scarcely give us more than three hundred millions. It is strange how this fact seems to be overlooked by those enthusiasts who bemoan the lack of new lands and peoples to exploit. If they will only examine the subject thoroughly, they will soon comprehend that we have hitherto but lightly skimmed over great fields. Take my own hobby, for instance, Asia. With all my travelling, and I have been through sections where no Caucasian has hitherto set foot, there are still wild territories, tribal districts, and we know not what, to reward the exertions of future explorers. We boast of our big cities, London, New York, Paris, and all, as being great hives of people; yet there are whole provinces in China that can almost be classified as a city. And as for density of population, just imagine, there is a square mile in Canton, said to contain nearly four hundred thousand human beings!"

"Pardon me," exclaimed Smythe, who had hitherto been most strangely silent. "That is not quite so unique as you seem to think. In this Empire City of New York we have a section in the tenement house district specifically bounded by the Bowery, Division, Norfolk, and Rivington streets, which from actual census, contains an average of four hundred and thirteen thousand residents to the square mile."

"And when one sees the streets thronged and every reeking room in the buildings over-

crowded, at one and the same time, such figures are easy to be believed," put in Ma quietly.

"How? Have you been there?" queried Smythe, in tones of amazed admiration.

The girl merely nodded her head in assent.

"She spends half her time among the nowadays, and throws away any quantity of food, coal, and medicine; not to speak of money for rent and doctors' bills," declared her father indulgently. "It has become a sort of fad, and I see no particular harm in when not carried to excess."

"You dear, delightful girl," twittered Eunice Von Ruytman. "How noble and good of you! I have always wanted to do just the same thing, but for some reason or other, I never seem to be able to spare the time."

"While I admire your personal unselfishness, Miss Carnwood," rather stiffly interposed the young matron; "I cannot admit the usefulness of desultory charity. In our Society for the Proper Education of the Poor in the Science of Cookery, we attack the problem at its very fountainhead. We have published at our own expense, a manual prepared by competent authorities, such as the chefs of our most fashionable restaurants and the professors of chemistry in leading colleges, showing how to prepare all manner of food in the most economical, and at the same time, most nutritious form. I have myself used the recipe for bisque of soft-shell crabs, and was delighted with

This book we distribute freely, without any charge whatsoever, among the masses. I hope you can be prevailed upon to subscribe towards future editions."

"Put her name down, madam, put her name down," gurgled Mr. Carnwood. "You will receive a check promptly. But Mr. Bengowisko," turning again to the explorer, "can't you give us another anecdote about yourself. Something like that adventure in the pagoda, eh? That was very enjoyable."

"I am sure that I shall be delighted," responded the lion courteously, "but turn about is fair play. Here is Miss Carnwood evincing great interest in my poor adventures, while her own in the mysterious depths of tenement-dom should be far more novel and entertaining. Can we not prevail upon her to relate some little interesting incident, that has come under her notice in the course of this courageous and I am sure most successful tenement missionary work?"

"That'll be jolly," ejaculated young Fogarty. "Those tough fellahs vewy amusing, 'wot'ell,' and all that soat of thing, don't y'know."

"I vote for something both mysterious and pathetic," cried Smythe, gazing full at the blushing Mary, "and I'll wager you can find such on the East side of New York, as well as in Asia."

"Hear, hear!" cried the lion, and nodded good-naturedly to the speaker.

"Mysterious and pathetic?" said the girl ner-



vously. "Why, to my mind, the whole essence of these poor wretches is both. I will acknowledge to being specially impressed with something I heard and saw this morning."

"This morning," echoed the others, leaning forward in expectancy at her earnest manner.

"Yes," she went on. "You must know one of my special proteges is a poor fellow who lost both of his hands in an accident. It seems that the railway company refuse to pay any damages, upon the grounds that he was negligent in not both seeing and hearing the approaching car."

"Quite right, too," muttered the magistrate. "Suits for damages eat up an awful lot of dividends on any street railway nowadays."

"And so," she continued, "as he is entirely helpless and unable to do much of anything, I try to"—

"Oh-ho" again interrupted her father ironically. "Instead of letting all the stockholders contribute to his support, it seems that his individual purse is standing the strain."

Mary held up one finger in a pretty convincing manner, and continued: "Judge of my astonishment this morning, when I found Ludovic Zam, with the aid of his totto teeth, lips, and bandaged stumps of arms, counting over a great pile of dirty bank notes and small currency."

"Hoarded up from what you had given him," declared the member of the S. P. E. P. triumphantly.

"Scarcely," remarked Mary smilingly, "seeing that the total of my humble donations would be trifling alongside of the sum spread out before him."

"You have been victimized by an impostor, and I shall certainly take steps to have him apprehended," cried her father indignantly.

"No, no," the girl said. "Listen? Of course I asked him for some explanation of this sudden wealth, and he immediately gave one which I believe to be true."

"Cawn't believe those kind of fellahs undah oath," murmured Ulysses, toying with the down on his upper lip.

"He told me that he belonged to a secret organization which had appointed him to carry out certain work, and"——

"Fudge! Nonsense!" cried Mr. Carnwood angrily.

"Even granting his sensational statement," remarked Smythe in earnest tones. "Where did all the money come from? Quite a sum, I think you said?"

"About three thousand dollars, Ludovic told me," Mary quickly replied.

"He must certainly have stolen it," cried somebody.

"No," persisted Mary stoutly. "It was raised by subscription. The organization, whatever it may be, has a very large membership. They are all, however, of the lower classes."

"Therefore, wretchedly poor," remarked Smythe.

"Poor—as you say," continued the girl, tears coming to her beautiful eyes, grandly poor! Many of them died like he to procure that trivial sum!"

"Died?" cried the guests.

"Bah Jove! don't call this kind of thing v jolly!"

"Yes. Died a horrible death—from station," went on the girl. "It seems that a number of members, who had no one dependent upon them for support, voluntarily committed suicide in this awful fashion, in order to provide the funds. They turned over every penny of their meagre wages to Ludovic, and without food or anything else, until they dropped. Some few were discovered and revived by charitable persons and society. Ludovic told me, but many of them hid away from such aid. He ran over a long list of their names and occupations but I was so much affected at the time to remember them."

"Did he mention a John Ferguson?" quietly asked Smythe.

"John Ferguson? Why, yes, I think he did. Do you know anything about it?" she asked wonderingly.

"Only this," he went on slowly. "I noticed in a newspaper recently, that the body of John Ferguson, a rather disreputable labor agitator, had been found in an alleyway. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of death from starvation."

A perceptible shiver went around the

gathering, and several of the guests made a sudden attack upon the hitherto despised wines and cordials. The room was hushed. The tension became painful. Suddenly, a door was flung violently open, and a blue-coated policeman bounded inside.

"Gintlemin and laydhies," he shouted in stentorian tones. "Don't ye go for to git frightened. Kape cool an' it won't be too hot for yees. Oi jist saw some smoke and fire comin' out from forninst the lower windey. There'll be no danger at all at all, with the luck of Hivin. Oi've rung fur th' ingins. Plaze don't faint laydhies for if you do you won't be afther being able to climb down the extinction ladders, an'"—

"Mon, dieu! Sacre!" interrupted a diminutive, white aproned and capped chef, dancing in behind the brawny Irishman, and continuing to rattle out ejaculations and explanations in such frantic fashion as to be scarcely understandable. "Eet is notings. Diable! Von petit flame. Pouf! Zen splash! I put heem out with von wataire buck-ket. Pardonnez moi, for zees in-tear-rup-shon. Also, for ze gendarme. He eez ex-cite-ed and not calm and composay, like mineself."

\* \* \*

Many of the guests declared that the Carn-wood dinner party had been the most sensational, and, consequently, most interesting, *function of the season.*

## INTERLUDE.

Which, being introduced solely for the Reader's benefit, need not Occupy Attention und Desired.

\* \* \*

In stagecraft it has ever been a basic principle to separate the production into convenient acts and scenes. This, for countless good and sufficient reasons which experience demonstrated and art has proved. In literature, more particularly in that branch called fiction, where a similar division of the whole is known to be almost equally necessary, chapters serve admirably for scenes, but no reasonable substitute (in the knowledge of the writer, at least) for the sharper demarkation of the act drop, has ever been attempted.

Of course, it will be admitted at once that ex- headings of Books I, II, and so on, together with such flimsy devices as leaving a few square inches of white paper between the ending of one portion of the work and the beginning of the next, are puerile and impotent for the purpose. What is wanted is something to cause the reading to be given over for a brief interval. Not too long, but just sufficient to enable the mind to properly classify and arrange the impressions already received, and be ready with whetted curiosity and more thorough comprehension for what is to follow.

*For instance, if the foregoing chapters had been enacted upon the stage, the audience*

spite of diverting conversation with companions or pleasing selections from the orchestra) would retain a more or less vivid mental picture of Ludovic Zam, the abnormally learned, handless, despicable appearing reformer; Phidias Rowell Smythe, the investigator; Jerome B. Carnwood, multi-millionaire; Chauncey Maguire, newspaper reporter; Harry, the hunchback; John Ferguson, labor martyr; Mary Carnwood, heiress and kindly visitor of the tenement poor; the Asiatic explorer; the stock broker; fair and foolish Eunice Von Ruytman; and the other characters. How they looked, and what they said and did; together with much additional purely fanciful conjecture regarding them. And when the tinkle of the bell was heard, the act drop ascended, and the orchestra ceased its melodious strains, such an audience (always provided the first act had proved of interest) would be ready with a renewed store of attention and discernment, to follow the forthcoming developments of theme and plot.

## CHAPTER V.

### ABOUT A YEAR LATER.

Phidias Rowell Smythe was sitting alone in the little piled-up office, but no trivial experiments occupied his leisure. Upon the contrary he sprawled back in the chair with his expensively booted feet resting against the edge of *the polished desk*, hands clasped over his head.

and eyes staring at a number of little wood barrels which were neatly tiered up on the available floor space.

Noise outside in hallway. Uniformed pressman entered, rolling a small keg similar in appearance to those already in the office. Messenger panted from combination of exertion and weather.

"Pretty heavy, sir," he remarked, at the same time placing the receipt book upon Smyth's desk and proceeding to tier his charge with the fellows.

"Yes, they're full of gold," laconically observed the investigator as he scribbled a name.

"If that's all you might give me one of them," laughed the fellow in a satirical tone, turning to depart. "You could easily spare a few from so many."

"They don't belong to me. I'm accepting delivery as a matter of friendly accommodation," said Smythe.

The man's eyes opened mildly, but he hastened away upon his long route without making further retort.

"I've had a number of queer starts in the course of my investigations," mused Smyth. "That hungry tramp who ate four big lemon meringue pies and then commenced with apparently undiminished zest upon the main dinner—Yes, and that agent who sold *bank* a fine big safe, had his own men put in, and then came the very next night and

the gorgeously enamelled and frescoed *wooden* box open with a common hatchet, and decamped with the valuables—And so on—But I must confess that this continual inflow of heavy little kegs rather lays over all of them. Funny thing, too. Expressman thought I was only joking when I said they contained gold. I tried it, just to test him—Wonder what the”—

A knock upon the door interrupted him, and an excited individual, with eyes all staring and bloodshot, entered.

“How do you do, Mr. Maguire,” remarked Smythe easily, nodding as he spoke to the new-comer.

“You know me?” queried the latter in evident surprise.

“If not personally, heretofore,” said the investigator blandly, “by reputation at least. Your signature is frequently printed appended to most interesting articles, and I have seen your portrait in the prospectuses and advertisements of new publications. Very glad, I’m sure, to have the pleasure of actually meeting the flesh and blood original.”

“Much obliged,” retorted the other wearily. “Strange, but your face is also familiar looking to me, for some reason or other, though I am afraid I cannot offer any precise explanation. It may sound ridiculous, but it seems as if I have come across you—or a person looking *very much like you*—several times—in odd places, too.”



"Where, for instance?"

"You would only laugh at the thing."

"No, no. Tell me?"

"Well, in the 23rd street sewer, for one."

"By Jove! That is funny."

"I know it. Absurd, of course, for me even imagine such a thing; but I"—

"Will you not inform me of the circumstances? I am becoming interested in this mysterious double of mine."

Maguire rested one arm upon the top of the desk and gazed full into Smythe's eyes. The latter returned the look without any apparent flinching.

"I have something specially important want to communicate to you," said the newspaperman nervously. "This idle fancy has nothing whatsoever to do with it—I hardly know how to begin."

"I would suggest a compromise. Enlighten me a little in regard to imagining that you saw me in—Where was it? Oh, yes, the 23rd street sewer. I will then help you in the beginning at least, of your own matter. Is it a bargain?"

Chauncey Maguire smiled rather incredulously and resumed in monotonous accent "I'm sure I have no objection if you can spare the time to listen. I was given an order to write up something sensational about the basements and sewers under New York City, and so as to give the proper local color even if nothing else. I bribed some workmen to take me along with them on one of their repair jobs. We all w

overalls and long rubber boots, and carried lanterns and tools. Descending from the street by means of a convenient man-hole, we tramped along the main sewer for a ways until we arrived at the spot where some tumbling bricks had to be replaced. While I was standing beside the workers, watching their labors in the uncertain light from the lanterns and endeavoring to become saturated with the lonely uncanniness of the place, so as to properly treat it in my projected article, I noticed a light, apparently approaching in the opposite direction to that from which we had come. Upon calling the foreman's attention to it, he gave but scant heed. 'Lots of times we see lights like that,' he said gruffly, 'and come to chase them up they're only jock-o-lanterns.' Of course, I understood what the fellow meant. In such confined and dampish places as sewers, phosphorescent glows and other similar phenomena are by no means uncommon. 'But this looks too real,' I remonstrated with the boss. 'Take a flare and go see for yourself,' he volunteered. 'If it ain't a jock, like enough its one of our men hunting for jewelry and silver spoons. Now and then we get such things in the side sewers.' This, of course, was all highly interesting to me, as furnishing matter for my Sunday special; and acting upon the friendly suggestion, I caught up a lantern and hastened *along the tunnel towards the distant glow.* *Sure enough, upon coming close I discovered*

a man, lantern at elbow, grubbing away in muck with a short iron rake. I made jesting remarks about wishing him a good haul, and finding him uncommunicative, tired back and rejoined my more congenial guest. To come to the pith of the whole, the light from my lantern and his, showed the investigator to be—making due allowance between the clothing of the latest mode and dirty overalls—strangely alike in feature to yourself. And moreover, as I said before, I have come across other seeming doubles of you in equally possible places.”

“Odd, of course, but by no means impossible.”

“How, Phidias Rowell Smythe, the leading young society man, would scarcely amuse himself by”—

“Oh, you took my remarks in another sense from what I intended,” put in the investigator calmly. “I meant in regard to these characteristics and resemblances. Nature has many moulds, it is not impossible, upon the contrary rather likely, that she occasionally repeats herself. I have no doubt personally, that there are very nearly exact duplicates in general appearance of both you and me alive, somewhere or other at this moment. That past and gone generations have showed such results is a matter of family record. But to come to your own business with me. You know I agreed to help you broaching it, if you would appease my curiosity by relating this little sewer incident.

want to say something to me concerning Miss Mary Carnwood?"

"What!"

"Ah! I only thought so, at first. Now I feel sure of it."

"But how do you know?"

"I am a bit of a mind reader."

Maguire absolutely glowered at this evasive remark, but restraining his quick temper with wonderful fortitude, commenced to talk again, in ordinary conversational tones.

"Of course, it is none of my business how you know that I wished to have a short interview with you, in relation to—Miss—Carnwood," he went on, appearing to hesitate at pronouncing her name; "and, moreover, I am probably treading on dangerous ground in even mentioning the subject; but—but—but"—

The newspaperman stammered, stopped, and seemed unable to proceed.

"Go on, Mr. Maguire," cried Smythe encouragingly. "A writer must assuredly have interesting matter to relate when he finds a difficulty about putting the thing in words."

"I have two points concerning Miss Carnwood, which I wish to mention to you," replied the other, turning as bold as he had before been timorous. "The first being, that she is in danger."

"What! Danger?" ejaculated the investigator, *jumping up from his chair*. "Speak out, man? What kind of danger?"

"As you are doubtless aware she has been spending a great deal of time in the last year or so, ministering to the unlimited wants of the miserable tenement poor. Indeed, she has been a veritable angel of Heaven among them. To see her, as I have done, going fearlessly into filthy cellars, pest-laden garrets, rooms reeking in unmentionable filth; unmindful of revolting faces and still more revolting tongues. Bringing help—comfort—life—to human souls that have hitherto scarcely known the meaning of a smile. My God! It almost seemed like contamination for her pure face to even look much as turn towards"—

"I think you mentioned something about Miss Carnwood being in danger;" interrupted Smythe, gazing at the animated expression of the newspaper man in some surprise.

"Danger?" returned the other fiercely. "Danger? Surely. Have you no appreciation of the frightful depths to which numbers of these same wretches to whom she ministers have sunk?"

Smythe involuntarily shivered and was about to speak.

"Danger?" croaked Maguire. "To say nothing of that which must be nameless, is the not the mere fact of her being the only daughter of one of America's millionaires, to incite

"What do you mean?"

"Little as she may realize it, some of the very grovelling creatures who accept her bene-

ties, are planning to profit richly through her carelessness."

"In what way?"

"You ask that? There are ways innumerable to cunning minds. Does she not go alone and unattended, or at most, accompanied only by some week-kneed serving man or hysterical waiting maid, into these dens, both honest and devilish, lowly and gilded? What, for one thing, is to prevent her being entrapped, hid away, imprisoned, what you will; and held for a frantic parent's money ransom?"

"Strange, I never thought of this, as you say, possibility. She must be warned, or at least—How comes it that you know so much concerning Miss Carnwood's visitations? You surely do not dwell in tenementdom?"

"No, no. Although I have seen the day more than once, when it would have been luxury to me. But I—I—encountered Miss Carnwood while working on a story. I was impressed with the risks she unknowingly runs and"—

"Constituted yourself a sort of private body-guard to her upon that occasion?"

"I did, and have done so many times since."

"Come, it was chivalrous, to say the least."

"I wish to tell you that so far as I could, I have kept out of sight, in order not to unnecessarily alarm her. Upon the few occasions when we have actually encountered each other, I always represented myself as the professional news-gatherer, engaged in regular work."

"But why come to me with this—Although

I own to thanking you most heartily for both the warning and your valiant custodianship. Why did you not go to Mr. Carnwood, her father?"

"I—I—Society gossip connects your—your name with Miss Carnwood's," stuttered the poor fellow, "and—I had another reason."

"Very good. Go on," replied Smythe coldly as he reseated himself.

"A great change has taken place in my circumstances, Mr. Smythe. I am—but I forget I must refrain from dwelling upon this, for the present."

"Allow me to congratulate you, nevertheless."

"Thanks, but listen to the end of what I am going to say. I have watched over the personal safety of Miss Carnwood—unknown to her, however, while she has been engaged in this tenement missionary work. Heaven knows how many times I have been near to strangling some wretch who followed her actions too closely with his crafty eyes. But enough of that. I have guarded her in the past, but will be unable to do so in the future. That is the first thing I came to tell you. She must be prevented from persisting in this dangerous field. The second thing is that—I"—

"Ah!"

"That I—that I love her. Thank Heaven it is out at last. I love her. There you have it."

"Scarcely any need of stating the matter &

explicitly, my dear fellow. I judged so from your"—

"Hitherto I have scarcely dared to even acknowledge such a thought to myself. But now"—

"Now?"

"I will win her if I can. I am no longer held at bay by dire poverty. I avow myself your rival for her hand."

"Maguire, I"—

"No, no. There is nothing to talk about. I have said everything necessary. See that she is warned; and, remember, I am going to win her for my wife if I can." And fairly shrieking the last few words, the newspaperman rushed from the office.

Phidias Smythe gave a sniff, shrugged his shoulders, and after a few moments rocked backwards and forwards discontentedly in his chair. Then his eyes sought the array of little kegs and a smile stole over his face. Without any sound of approaching footsteps a sharp "rat-tat-tat" was beaten upon the frosted pane of the door, evidently by a pair of human knuckles.

"Come in," shouted the investigator, and added to himself in an undertone: "This seems to be a sort of reception day for me."

Two men entered. The first, otherwise dressed in accord with prevailing fashion, had a long cloth cape draped over his narrow shoulders. The second, was a coal-black negro, evidently a servant, and carried a very com-



mon looking hand satchel. Smythe gazed with mild curiosity at the intrusion, but offered no word of welcome or salutation. For one thing he was scarcely given time to do so. The individual in the cape spoke sharply to him in some lower in some foreign tongue. The latter, once advanced, placed the satchel upon the desk in front of Smythe, and then withdrew from the apartment, closing the door after him with a sharp bang.

"I trust you will not object if my man keep watch outside," commenced the stranger harshly. "I wish to have a short interview, free from all chance of intrusion or eavesdropping."

"As you please," replied the investigator, turning slightly upon his chair in order to produce a wicked looking revolver from a right hand drawer. He laid the firearm ready to hand, and went on: "Have a seat. Might as well be comfortable. You may remove the cut-glass punch bowl to the"—

The stranger gave a shrug of impatience and calmly raising one foot, kicked the valuable piece of ware into a corner of the small apartment. It struck a steel anvil and smashed to countless fragments.

"Charge my account with the damage," laconically observed, throwing himself into the vacant chair.

"I am not aware that you have any account with me," coolly replied Smythe.

"*I intend to open one. That is the purpose of my interview.*"

"Ah!"

"I scarcely expected to find you so antagonistic. What need of the revolver?"

"Merely a fancy of mine."

"Is it loaded?"

"Yes. See for yourself. Five chambers. Additional ammunition in the drawer."

"A nice looking weapon. The calibre is odd. I should judge it to be forty-nine."

"I must congratulate you upon your keen eye. You are evidently an expert."

"Pshaw! I have been going into that and similar subjects very thoroughly, of late. But we are losing time. Can I have an absolutely confidential talk with you?"

"How about your servant? The sentinel outside my office door."

"He is faithful, and, moreover, understands no English."

"Good."

"I see no signs of any telephone?"

"I have purposely avoided the having of this dangerous instrument in my one and only private office. No risk of being overheard in that fashion. You noticed me produce this revolver?"

"Most assuredly."

"That should have been proof enough of our present absolute privacy."

"How?"

"It showed that I fully appreciate what you *do not seem to realize.*"

"Eh?"

"That we are in a modern office built with sound-proof floors, ceilings, and partition walls. If you and your companion had to be desperate men and I without this means of defense, I might be murdered even my body remain undiscovered until rent began to worry my landlord's agent."

"Splendid! It would be different if you were a clerk?"

"Yes, but this small weapon answers the same purpose admirably—and draws no salary."

"Enough. Let us get down to business."

"At your pleasure."

"You wish to make money?"

"That is the task upon which I, in connection with many other individuals, am engaged."

"But do you wish to make a great deal of money?"

"Yes and no. I have a limit. In this respect I differ from most men."

"What is your limit?"

"A million dollars. I should not care for a slight fraction more or less."

"Kindly open that satchel which my friend has placed upon your desk?"

Smythe did as requested without comment.

"What do you see inside?" went on the other man.

"A package of Bank of England notes."

"Exactly. Take it out and count it up—*total.*"

"That would consume too much time."

know a better way to quickly determine their value."

"Suit yourself."

"Slipping the rubber bands from off the bundle I snap the notes quickly over at the edge with my thumb and forefinger. This, to make sure that they are all of the same denomination—one thousand pounds sterling."

"Yes."

"Then I toss the package upon these apothecary scales. Knowing the exact weight of a single bill, I can readily calculate that the total is—two hundred and six—or—one million, three thousand one hundred and seventy-three dollars and thirty-three cents in American money, at the present rate of exchange."

"Good. This amount is yours, subject to certain conditions."

"I have always noticed that most such things have conditions attached to them."

"You do not seem to be particularly gratified over the present prospect."

"I am waiting to hear the conditions. I may not be able to accept them."

"Is it possible that I have found a young modern business man who will not jump at the chance of securing a sum of this magnitude, no matter what the conditions may be?"

"You have. And there are many others of the same mind with myself the opinions of all cynics to the contrary, notwithstanding."

"Well said. However, I do not believe my demands will be found excessive. This thing is perfectly honest and straightforward. A business transaction, pure and simple."

"That bars me out at once, if such is the whole case. I am not engaged in ordinary business."

"You decline the money offhand?"

"I must, according to certain rules which have laid down for myself."

"What are these rules?"

"They will have to remain my own secret otherwise their value to me would be lessened."

"I have encountered and overcome all sorts of objections and scruples during the last year. I do not intend to be baffled in this same matter."

"I can assure you that I regret the necessity I am under of passing by this opportunity don't mind acknowledging that I am anxious for certain private reasons, to become possessed of the sum you offer."

"Good. This is the first encouraging word I've had from you so far. I do not doubt ultimate success. There is always some loophole in a man's armor, if it can only be found."

"That is right. But you will have to find the loop-hole in mine, alone. I cannot offer any assistance in the search."

"One of these rules of yours will undoubtedly prove to be the loophole if I can discover it."

"I hardly think so, although, everything is possible."

"Do you remember of seeing me before?"

"No."

"My attendant?"

"No."

"Going back a little further: Have you walked along Grand street in the evening?"

"Often."

"Did you ever witness an accident there, in which a street car ran over a poor unfortunate?"

"Why—yes!"

"Ah-ha!"

"Are you"—

"Softly, softly. Not too fast. Look further in the satchel. What do you see?"

"A business card. One of my own."

"It was found in the pocket of the poor unfortunate by the hospital attendants, and given to him next morning. It must have been placed there for some purpose or other, immediately after the accident; for the injured man distinctly asserts that it was not in his pocket before."

"I put the card in his pocket myself."

"You?"

"Yes."

"The thing states that you are a confidential agent. I wish to secure somebody to act in that capacity for me."

"I would do so for the wounded man. That is in accordance with my rules. But not for"—

"I am the victim."

"You"—

"For a proof," suiting actions to the words and throwing back his cape, "see, here are my handless arms."

"Very good. I am satisfied thus far. I will accept your generous fee and act for you if"

"Another if?"

"If I can do so in all honesty."

"Well, let us proceed."

"I don't mind admitting, in order to clear the way, that I chance to possess some rather peculiar information about yourself."

"Is it possible. You arouse my curiosity. May I not hear it?"

"Your name is Ludovic Zam."

"Yes."

"A year or two ago you were destitute and dependent upon charity for the commonest necessities. Suddenly, you were found possessed of several thousand dollars, and the explanations you gave were somewhat out of the ordinary. Now, apparently, you have millions to dispose."

"All true. I don't deny it. I have no desire to keep these bare facts secret."

"Very good. Now as to the conditions upon which I am to have this bundle of Bank of England notes?"

"It has taken time, but I discovered the loophole, at last. Ha-ha! Excuse me, but I cannot help feeling relieved, as all my plans mature, one by one.—Those are pretty big legs?"

"Ah! Yes. Rather neat."

"Will you excuse me if I remove a shoe?"

"Most certainly. Any convenience that my small office affords to"—

Ludovic Zam, using the other as a sort of bootjack, slipped off one shoe and exposed a bare foot of ivory whiteness.

"May I ask you to kindly lay a sheet of paper and a pen upon the floor?" he said to Smythe.

The latter, unable to repress signs of interest, did as requested.

Zam grasped the inked pen between his toes and cleverly wrote some words upon the paper. The characters were of a straggling angular variety, but remarkably plain.

"What do you make of it?" he questioned Smythe, who had promptly picked up the scrawl.

"Perfectly satisfactory," replied the latter, after producing a slip of parchment from his pocket-book and comparing something written upon it with the new copy.

"These kegs. Heavy—as lead?" recommenced the handless one.

"Er—yes."

"Arriving at the rate of six or seven per week?"

"Yes."

"By express?"

"Just so."

"Charges fully prepaid?"

"A wise precaution. I commend it."



"Shipped from various part of Asia?"

"So I noticed by the express company's receipts."

"Names of consignors most diverse, but probably fictitious?"

"That is the way I regarded it."

"Received by you with considerable misgivings, but accepted under mild protest, with the idea that future developments regarding them should be awaited?"

"Exactly."

"Letter received by you bearing the signature of another mythical personage in Hong Kong, stating that a number of packages containing samples of iron ore from various parts of Asia, were about to be forwarded to your address; and that an individual who wrote the few words upon an enclosed slip of parchment and could in like manner prove his identity, would claim them and see to it that you were satisfactorily reimbursed for your services?"

"Yes."

"The words upon the slip of parchment are, 'John Fegurson was a true martyr'—Have I proved myself to your complete satisfaction?"

"You have. Now, as they appear"—

"Appear?" put in the handless one.

"I would say, as they have been proven to belong—er—or appertain to one of my clients, I"—

"Why do you make the limitation?—Appertain?"

"I have opened some of the little barrels."

"It was only right and proper. You did not want to risk their contents being dangerous."

"I found the few sample kegs which I examined, to contain one of the most dangerous things in existence."

"Ah!—But why 'appertain?' "

"I can scarcely imagine a single individual exercising sole ownership over such an amount of concrete wealth—not simply stocks, shares, mortgages, real estate, and other representatives of money values; but the actual precious standard metal itself."

"You are right. It is a trust fund, of which I have the dispensing."

"You are to be congratulated."

"What did you find specifically in the few kegs you opened?"

"Gold and jewels, scattered in a rather promiscuous fashion."

"What did it look like?"

"The gold appeared to have been rudely shaped rings and ornaments, hammered into a fairly compact mass."

"And the jewels?"

"As mixed a lot and more so. Two huge rubies took my fancy."

"Where do you imagine they came from?"

"Rubies such as these are rare and treasured. European monarchs put them in crowns, and surely would be loth to dispose of them. I fancy, (*pardon me if I am too conjectural*) *I fancy that these rubies may have been eyes*

in some horrible shaped carven image of a heathen temple."

"You are correct in this surmise. But no need to go into any more detail. Time is passing. Of one thing you may rest assured; that the wealth contained in these small kegs—and they will continue to arrive for some weeks longer—is honestly come by, with its last owner's proper consent. It is mine—or at least, mine to dispose of in a certain way. You are to turn this raw bullion into legal currency, an easy task for one of your standing."

"Why, yes, I can do that, I think."

"Moreover, you are to purchase certain goods with the sum so realized, and hand over any unexpended balance to me."

"What kind of goods?"

"Look in the satchel once again, and take out the remaining article in it. A roll of documents. They are lists of stuff, conveniently arranged for the regular trades."

"I see—Very well—Rifles, cartridges, machine guns, tents, blankets, belts, swords—Why, this is military equipment? Enough I should judge for an enormous army."

"Yes."

"And the next list appears to be for naval requisites—Steel plates, ingots, tubes, rifled cannon, machinery"—

"Just so."

"And here are several steamships to be bought?"

"They will carry the goods to their destinations."

"It looks as if warfare upon a large scale was under contemplation, or, at least, being prepared for?"

"It certainly does."

"But this order comes my way, from one of my personal clients, and is in due accord with my limitations."

"What then?" said Ludovic, at the same time skillfully inserting the naked foot in his shoe.

"Only that I accept the conditions—and the million."

"All right. Good day."

The attendant outside must have heard the quick step of the handless man, for the door swung open and closed after him, with machine-like precision.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BREAKING THE RECORD.

A big barnlike hall of irregular proportions. Indications of attempted decoration upon walls and ceilings, luckily not carried out in its promised hideousness. Little fenced enclosures and pent-houses ranged around the sides. Two curious tracts at either extremity, consisting of row upon row of stalls, electric lighted, with telephones instead of nose bags, and desk-shelves in the place of mangers. Scattered here and there about the main floor with some *degree of regularity*, sign-surmounted posts,

rising from a circular pyramid of seat and miscellaneous adorned wooden erection. High on the longest stretch of clear wall, a thing like a barber's sign-board, arranged vertical stripes of divers colors alternately with black, in which square spots are continually appearing and disappearing, revealing a erasing combinations of numbers beneath. Upon the bare floor a mob of well-dressed and prosperous looking men; some standing still and quiet; some moving restlessly hither and thither and ranting like exhorting parson; some of both the before mentioned varieties intermixed, but all of them upon the alert and quick witted. A considerable leavening of gray-uniformed messengers, threading through the mob, receiving and delivering tiny messages with the precision of automatons. In the aggregate, a noisy bustling mob; an untidy mob, thickly strewing the floor of the great apartment with torn scraps of paper; a peculiarly selfish mob, the individuals being entirely intent upon themselves and their own interests. In brief: the New York Stock Exchange in the full of flood of business.

Aside from the continuous roaring produced by the combination of hundreds of human voices engaged in ordinary speech, the varieties of noises are well nigh bewildering to an inexperienced onlooker. At intervals members break forth into song or whistle, out of pure recklessness or perhaps to relieve overcharged feelings. Cat-callings are frequent. Some

dividuals have special gifts in the way of Indianlike hoots or yelps, which they utilize upon occasion. Finger-snapping, feet-scuffling, hand-clapping, even clothes-rustling, are so many other items of no mean total proportions. In with all is commingled a click-br-clickety-click-br-r-r-r-r-r click - click - clicking from the telegraphic instruments; a constant rattle of bells, muffled and otherwise, from the hundreds of telephones; and last, but certainly by no means least, the continuous shouting of the vending brokers.

It is the New York Stock Exchange in the full flood of business, and, moreover, in the height of the summer season. Straw hats and fans are present in the proportion of very nearly one of each to a person. Handkerchiefs are wiping off perspiration sufficient to turn a good sized water-wheel, if the power could only be satisfactorily applied. The almost incessant banging to and fro of the many swing doors leading outward, lets in a vast amount of heated air and burning dust from the streets, which gives plenty of work to the big circular machine fans. Some members are refreshing themselves with juicy fruit. Thoughtless ones keep the taps on the ice-water coolers busy. Others simply pant, and bear it as best they can.

Near one of the sign-stands, with its array of commonplace letterings, quotation sheets and posted bulletins, a young man is engaged *in throwing up his right hand with first and*

second fingers prominently raised, at frequent intervals. To this accompaniment he kept shouting a sentence which sounds not unlike "S'l M'd'B'th sx'ty-two!" The young man none other than B. Horatio Dibbs.

For a little while he attracts no special attention among the pausing or hurrying men around him, but, finally, another youthful individual with no less than seven colors in his hat band, plants himself near, and commences crying: "S'l M'd'B'th sx'ty one h'lf!" While so engaged, he also claws frantically heavenward with his own digits.

Horatio whistles a few bars of a popular tune in an off key, claps a passing acquaintance on the shoulder, turns upon his heels, and hurries away.

Scarcely has he departed when a portly individual, holding a pith helmet in one hand and operating a palmetto fan above his head with the other, comes prancing toward the gay-ribanded youth, and bellows: "S'l M'd'B'th sx'ty one h'lf!"

There is a hasty scrawling of two pen numbers upon little pocket pads and the newcomer is left to follow out the same programme of apparently frenzied exhortations.

At first he begins: "Buy M'd B'th sx'ty one h'lf!"

But he does not so continue for very long. Slightly changing his key, as well as the length of the accented word, he cries: "Buy M'd B'th sx'ty-two!"

A couple of members pause about eighteen inches from this yelper. One is relating something of a humorous nature to the other, for they both smile and laugh at frequent intervals. How they can even remain undisturbed, let alone enjoy anecdote in the noisy neighborhood, is a mystery. But then, use will accustom to almost anything.

Meanwhile, the shouter has once more slightly changed his note. "Buy M'd B'th sx'ty two h'lf!" he now screams.

A short, plump gentleman, of a decidedly Semitic cast of countenance, who is sauntering along the floor, stops to listen, but gives no other sign of attention.

"Buy M'd B'th sx'ty three!" ejaculates the noisy bald-head, at the same time snapping a trio of fingers towards the newcomer.

The latter suddenly leaps into activity, makes a wild lunge with one arm, howls something, the pencils scribble. Another broker stops to listen.

"Buy M'd B'th sx'ty three!" the portly individual resumes.

A little crowd begins to gather round, which rapidly increases. Pencils are scribbling continually. Hands and arms wave like animated semaphores above the struggling mass. The noise becomes an indistinguishable babel. The men with the naval caps who supply the telegraph operators at the innocent looking tall boxes with their paper slips of mystical numberings, have a hard struggle to keep up with



the climbing quotations for the stock of Wow Chow Mud Bath Corporation Limited of New York, London, and Wow Ch China.

Meanwhile, Horatio Dibbs, who has ed away at such an inopportune moment, reached his office in the near side street. small, rusty looking sign above the door b the simple inscription "Davenport, Dobso Dibbs." The place is a low, damp basen room, sub-divided by partitions. It would well nigh worthless in any other part of city, except perhaps to store salt provisio but, being in this neighborhood, comman yearly rental high up in the four figures. air is blue with tobacco smoke. In the n portion, a few customers are hanging inte over the slow-moving tapes of the price cording instruments, but the majority of crowd have gathered to one side, and are ing in mute rapture at the shuffling fee one of their number. A street piano, ou the gutter, is furnishing the orchestral acc paniment, in volume of noise at least, if nc quality. A silver coin has just been thro to the musical itinerant, and that worthy tive of the blue-skied country beyond the s is endeavoring to furnish full value for money. Just back of the step dancer a pon dour-haired clerk is casting up long colu of figures without any apparent difficulty

*Dibbs steals an admiring glance at the formance, and hurries to an inner sanc*

It is a private holy of holies, reserved for special customers. At the present moment Jerome B. Carnwood occupies the big, upholstered arm chair. He has one boot upon the polished table, a huge, unlit cigar between his teeth, and is allowing the tape from a ticker to pass through his fingers in a patronizing style.

"Did you sell?" queries the multi-millionaire, with feverish eagerness.

"Nope. Couldn't getta bid at y'r lim't," replies the broker, who is much out of breath.

"I'm going to be a loser on the investment, I'm afraid," retorts the magnate.

"Sorry but I n'vr claim'd 'ny inside 'nformation 'n the stock. If you will 'member, you ordered m' t' buy two hundr'd shares. Lemme see—'Twas one y'r din'r pr'ties—Time when fell fr'm Asia"—

"I know, I know," interrupts Mr. Carnwood impatiently. "The thing was just a little whim of mine. Oddness of name kind of took my fancy; and that together with all our Oriental talk—Eh! What's this?" interrupting himself to read the clicking quotation aloud. "'One hundred Mud Bath sixty-one and a half!'"

"H'lf point b'low 'r limit," slyly intimates Dibbs.

"So, so. And I paid seventy-four and three-eighths for mine, last year. I was willing to pocket a moderate loss, but hang me, if I'll throw the stuff away."

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"B'd news fr'm th' Orient," put in Dib sagaciously. "Bot'm dropping out 'f 'vrythi Asian. 'Nother muddle 'n China. New complications 'n Philipines—Reported uprising 'n British India—Shouldn't wonder 'f M B'th falls h'lf d'zn points more, 'fore th' closing. Others, same line, 'parently going th' way."

"Two hundred Mud Bath, sixty-two," reads Mr. Carnwood from the ticker tape.

"Bulls trying t' ham'r up a trifle to cover shorts," volunteers the broker.

"One hundred Mud Bath, sixty-three announces the magnate triumphantly, scarce taking his eyes from the moving strip of paper.

Horatio instantaneously breathes quick action from every pore, and poises on one foot ready for the race, like a very Mercury. "M b' time f'r 's t' 'nload," he gurgles, preparatory to dashing away.

"Stop!" cries Mr. Carnwood, beaming with good nature. "'Four hundred Mud Bath, sixty-four'—what do you think of that? Jumping a whole point at a lick. I've changed my mind. I won't sell just yet. There's something in this. Shouldn't be surprised if they going to release their deferred dividend, so to keep up till the storm passes. If that's the case it ought to scale higher."

"Just 's you say, sir. I'm going back t' the floor," assents the waiting Mercury, and starts abruptly upon his flight.

The street piano outside stops short in the middle of a coon break-down. A loud acclamation and vigorous clapping of hands, attests the appreciation of the step-dancer's efforts. A general exodus from the customer's room takes place. It is lunch time, and dashing blades with scarcely more than a couple of hundred dollars to bless themselves with, hunt over high-priced restaurant bills of fare, in order to pick out the highest-priced dainties. Millionaire Carnwood remains in the little private office and sends out by the pompadour-haired clerk for "two roll ham sandwiches, with plenty of Dutch mustard." Even while he gnaws at these filling, if not highly nutritious substances, he keeps close watch upon the ticker tapes and news bulletins.

"Recent advices by way of Peking," he reads from one of the ink-wet printed slips which are being ever and again brought in by uniformed messengers, "report uprisings much more serious than cabled. One body of malcontents, near Hai-Chin, utterly defeated a superior force of soldiery sent expressly to overawe them. It is stated that the pavilion and hospital buildings of the Wow Chow Mud Bath Corporation have been destroyed and all patients and European attendants massacred. Warships of the specially interested nations are being hurried to the neighborhood, and the diplomatic corps has lodged a decisive protest with the Tsung-li-Yamen."

*Scarcely has he finished reading this singl:*

item from among the happenings of the restless world, when his eyes revert to the paper tape, grinding away unceasingly. 500 : B&G 112 $\frac{7}{8}$  : : 250 : A.T. PAC. : 42 1-3 : : 1000 M. X. T. 73 $\frac{1}{2}$  : : and so on, print the busy revolving types. Suddenly Mr. Carnwood gives a whistle of amazement.

"Three hundred Mud Bath, at seventy-two and seven-eighths," he says aloud. "Don't believe I ever saw stocks climb, one might well say leap upward like that, close upon the heels of disastrous news. Must be a phenomenally strong buying interest on the market. By jimminetty! I'll hold off a little yet. I could sell now and come out about even, figuring commissions and interest—'Mud Bath seventy-three and one-third'—What's this? Wow!—'Mud Bath, seventy-five offered'—Looks as if somebody is hungry for it. Shall I 'phone Dibbs to sell? No, I guess I'll step around on 'Change and have a look for myself."

The advent of Jerome B. Carnwood upon the floor of the Stock Exchange is somewhat of a rarity. To be sure, by the payment of a sum equivalent to the whole life's wages of an average working man, he has secured the use of that mythical piece of furniture known as a "seat" within its precincts. Nevertheless he rarely avails himself of the privilege, and even when he does, takes no active part in the buying and selling. But such trivial attendance cannot constitute him a stranger to the

regular habitues. Not to know Jerome B. Carnwood would be to argue oneself unknown. The doorkeeper fairly beams with deference as he permits the magnate to enter in unquestioned. The youthful member with the extremely parti-colored hat riband, actually steps to one side in order to allow him to pass. Many brokers salute the multi-millionaire with a strange mixture of courtesy and expectation, as if they rather considered it in the light of a business investment. There is a perceptible rustle up aloft in the visitors' gallery, as some enthusiastic but slightly uninformed salesman from the "white goods" district further uptown, points out Mr. Carnwood to admiring country friends as "Thadeus Mullingstone, the salt-cod magnate!" meaning by this somewhat badly constructed even if commonly used idiom, not that the slighted Mr. Mullingstone differs from ordinary mortals in being a magnate physiologically constructed from the cured fish, but rather financially, and synonomously, famously so.

B. Horatio Dibbs, deep in the important subject of planning with other compatriots for a yachting cruise down Long Island Sound, is compelled to break off in the very middle of guest-listing (an extremely difficult item for anybody and particularly for a stock-broker who must regulate his social diversions towards customer-catching) and warily keeps watch upon Mr. Carnwood's desires. *Not that the broker openly bustles forward*

like an honest store-keeper, rolling palms together and inquiring what he may do to serve his client. Bless you, no. Horatio realizes which side of his cake bears the icing much better than that. The magnate has several other brokers and is apt to change even this elastic combination whenever their connection with him becomes too well known. Horatio puts off this evil day from himself as far as possible, by fighting shy of Mr. Carnwood in financial circles. However, poor enough as either a nod or a wink may be to a blind horse, these same signals become vastly more intelligible when construed by a keen-eyed stock-broker.

In strolling, with seeming aimlessness, about the crowded floor, Jerome B. Carnwood chances to observe a familiar face in one of the railed-off lobbies. The face does not light up with gratified recognition in answer to the multi-millionaire's cool nod, however, but continues gazing, with a fixed earnestness of purpose at a nearby portly broker; more precisely, he of the pith helmet and bald head. This latter individual is once again well-nigh deserted by his confreres, but continues vociferating loudly, with the usual human semaphoric embellishments: "Buy M'd B'th 'leven seven-eighths!"

The magnate has two sensations. One may be classified as astonishment, the other *curiosity*. "One hundred, eleven and seven-eighths!" he ejaculates inwardly, as a result of

the first condition. "Maguire must be intent upon something, not to have seen me," is his thought regarding the second.

Jerome B. Carnwood has made it a point never to neglect the little things of life. This may be one reason for his rapid rise to wealth. He now saunters into the lobby and addresses the rapt spectator.

"How do, Maguire?"

"Er—How do you do, Mr. Carnwood?" returns the other confusedly.

He readily follows the magnate to a settee, where a good view of the floor is still possible, while they are more secluded from chance eavesdropping.

"That was a particularly nasty attack on me in yesterday's 'Diary,'" commences the multi-millionaire. "Have you any idea who, or what, is responsible for it?"

"No," replies the other calmly. "I could not even guess for I have lost track of their editorial changes. I have not been on the 'Diary' in—not for over a year, I guess."

"What paper are you with now?"

"None. I am glad to say that I have left journalism for ever."

"May I ask your plans? It might be that I—I have always taken an interest—a deep interest in"—

"Thanks, very much, Mr. Carnwood. I—I am putting through"—

*Just at this instant the pith-helmeted one shrieks: "Buy M'd B'th twelve!"*



Maguire stops abruptly.

Mr. Carnwood is wonderfully astute. "Mr. Bath climbing pretty lively, eh?" he comments, watching the ex-newspaper man's face with cat-like eagerness.

"Ye—e—es."

"Probably most of it bought up by the time?"

"I should think so—Except a few hundred shares."

"Looks like a corner of some kind?"

"I—I presume so."

"I've got a couple of hundred shares of the stuff myself. Would"—

"You?"

"Yes. It appears to —"

"Two hundred! That is just—You've seen the latest reports, have you not? Destruction of corporation's whole plant, and all that sort of thing?"

"Yes, but I don't believe that I care to sell."

"Good profit at present figures, I should imagine."

"Small matter, small matter, my dear fellow."

"Mr. Carnwood, you—you spoke a few moments since about having always taken no interest in me.—What will you sell your two hundred shares at?"

"To you?"

"Yes; to me. At least, the transaction had best be made through Jenkins."

"Your broker?"

"In a way. For people I represent."

"I don't hardly know."

"Mr. Carnwood, I have been able to be of service to you in the past, in many little ways. This is a matter of—well, pretty nearly life and death to me, I may say. Come, as a special favor? As you said yourself, it is only a small matter."

"As a special favor to you, eh? This is scarcely business. But, taking everything into consideration—I will sell my small holdings in this stock for"—Here his voice sinks so low as to be well-nigh inaudible. Chauncey hears it, however, and his face flushes a bright scarlet.

Mr. Carnwood rises and drifts majestically over towards the portly gentleman of the pith helmet. This individual is clawing viciously for another handful of air and shouting with power of voice slightly weakened: "Buy M'd B'th fifteen three-eighths!"

B. Horatio Dibbs is close beside the same stand, telling a fellow broker a travelling experience, illustrating certain phases by unique contortions of his whole body, munching at a big peach, fanning himself with a palmetto, and keeping a watchful eye upon the precise spot in the lofty barber-sign arrangement which appertains to him, as well as upon Jerome B. Carnwood's slightest gesture. *Despite these varied occupations he finds an occasional moment to flirt with a party o*

pretty school ma'ams up in the visitors' gallery, and to hail passing comrades with choicest witticisms. All this for a commission of one-eighth of one per cent. upon any transactions he may be able to accomplish.

"Buy M'd B'th sixteen!" rasps out the patient and perspiring Jenkins.

A boy comes and hands him a note. Probably grateful for the respite, the bald-head wipes his reeking brows, puts on the helmet and glances carelessly over the little missive. It produces a wonderful effect upon him. His eyes open wide. He looks up hastily, and with apparent perplexity absolutely glares over towards the lobby. Carnwood is watching. He sees Maguire nod assent.

"Hang it! I've given my word!" the man ejaculates in tones of deep disgust.

"Beg your pardon, sir, but did"—begins the broker of the hat riband of many colors, with chances to be at his elbow.

The multi-millionaire turns away without noticing him.

"By jinks! Thought he was speaking to me," murmurs the disappointed youth. "Might have been a thousand share order."

Meanwhile, Jenkins has taken out a pair of gold-mounted eye-glasses and adjusted them carefully to his nose. He now holds the small missive in the best light available and examines it critically. He even turns it over and looks upon the blank side, as if he half expected to find a revoking codicil there.

Apparently satisfied at last, he produces a pocket-book in which he solicitously deposits the written message. Immediately after returning the receptacle to its inner place of safety, he jams his pith helmet well down over his face until he resembles an extinguished candle. Next, he rolls up both sleeves of his light-weight jacket, executes a by no means ungraceful little dance, tries to imitate the war-whoop of a Comanche Indian, and fails miserably in all except the noise. Attracted by these innovations, which they well know to mean something out of the ordinary, a crowd quickly gathers around him. Word is passed with almost telegraphic promptness and the rest of the stands are practically deserted. Clusters of air and vociferators of all manner of unintelligible gibberish temporarily abandon their efforts and join in the curious rush. Even the staid presiding officer at his throne-like desk, looks up from the cheap, poorly printed home newspaper which he has been looking over with such rapt interest, and grasps hold of the convenient gavel with manner indicative of seeing a possible use for this official weapon in the immediate future. The portly Jenkins is fairly overwhelmed. Not for some moments is he able to accomplish his purpose. But at length he upraises both of his arms to their full height, and ejaculates in tones completely at variance with ordinary usage:

*"Buy—Mud—Bath—Regular—One thous  
and!"*

An instant of absolute quiet. The telegraphic clicks can scarcely be counted in such sudden cessation of all else. Next moment—hurly-burly, football rush, pandemonium. Hundreds of men engaged in a wrestling match. Some fling themselves impotently about and wedge the solid, struggling mass still more tightly together. Every tongue raised in clamor. Derisive howlings, applauding shouts, epithets, words, cries, and groanings! There is no chance for individual effort here. The clerical looking gentleman who has achieved the apparently impossible; other times, by successfully imitating a full sized steam whistle with his perfectly normal extent of throat, finds himself unnoticed upon this occasion. So with the special hooters and yelpers. The volume of general sound is too much for the local. The greatest noise that has ever been made by the noisiest assemblage in the whole world!

If the presiding officer's gavel was a steam hammer, it would be equally useless. The uproar continues.

But B. Horatio Dibbs has caught Mr. Carrawood's sullen wink. The college athletic training now comes into play. Pushing clear from the wildly excited crowd around him for a single second, the broker's hand goes up, and although his shriek of "Sold!" is inaudible above the clamor, Jenkins has accepted the sale with a single move of a finger.

Five minutes later all is as before.

air-clawers and vociferators have gone back to their special stands. The presiding officer is once again deeply interested in the account of how his old farm chum is engaged in a line fence dispute with the village postmaster. The comers and goers are doing accordingly, and the standers are also following the same routine. The barber's sign is winking numerals even more rapidly than ever, perhaps with the idea of making up for lost time. Jerome B. Carnwood and Chauncey Maguire are nowhere to be seen. Dibbs is also missing temporarily. The broker of the pith helmet is just stepping into the elevator, bound for the board room meeting upstairs.

"By Jinks!" says the youth of the hat-riband which puts the historic coat of Joseph in the shade, to a white-haired companion. "Biggest jump in the history of the Stock Exchange!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### ABOVE AND BELOW.

"Then I may consider your special talents to be at our disposal—along the lines mentioned," said Ludovic Zam.

"My dear sir," gurgled the unofficial member of Congress, "it is out of keeping with my custom to make promises beforehand as to what I can or cannot accomplish. You must well know that, despite the frailties and weak-

nesses of humanity, a vein of absurd principle is frequently encountered in the least like natures, and those"—

"Thank God for it," murmured Ludov under his breath.

"Er—Excuse me. Oh, I beg pardon, I'm sure. Throat trouble? Annoying. Very well, as I was saying, although results can scarcely be absolutely guaranteed; yet with the incentives of your—er—generosity before him, Alonzo Burnham sees no special reason why he should not be as successful as in time past. In other words—er—I am yours for command, and some influential members, honored members, sir, of Congress are mine subject to certain contingencies which, as have remarked, cannot be exactly determined beforehand."

"Very good," replied Zam in tones of forced cordiality; "and now, if you will be kind enough to excuse me, I must keep another important engagement."

"But the lunch, or rather this superb collation, remains untouched," cried the epicure wonderingly, indicating the array of dishes and cut glass set out upon the table in the small but magnificently appointed private dining room.

"My condition prevents me from participating except with the aid of an assistant," said Zam gravely, at the same time holding out his two handless arms in mute appeal; "and I must confess to a feeling of unwillingness about

trading my infirmities upon others. But pray refresh yourself, if you care to, and pardon the absence of a host."

"I beg of you to accept my most sincere condolences," replied the professional lobbyist, hastily moving forward to pour himself out a glass of wine, and quaffing it down with great gusto. "May I ask—er—in what way you—er—were unfortunate enough to receive this well nigh—er—unsupportable injury?"

"You may."

"Ah! ha-ha! I may ask? Very good, my dear sir, very good. And yet I believe that I have read in some paper or heard—I rather think that I read on some news-sheet, some item or other concerning you. Your name certainly seems familiar to me, although I cannot place the connection at the moment. But regarding the—er—unfortunate plight in——If you will pardon the allusion?—which you happen to be, The thing reminds me of a little incident, the knowledge of which came my way through official channels—official channels, sir. In fact, in the course of a conversation with an employee of the State Department, touching a consular report from Hong Kong."

"Well?"

"Regarding you, as I do, in the relation of *a client*, it occurs to me that the incident might—er—amuse you. Nothing more, of course



Would you—er—would you like to have repeat it?”

“Why yes, if you care to.”

“Ever alive to the best interests of my constituents, sir, I always make it a point of giving them full information regarding any matter which might, even in a remote degree, seem appropriate. Sometimes, in fact very often these little details of political gossip, which may state I have very special facilities for picking up, serve only to entertain. But, now and then, a most important point is”—

“Yes, yes, I understand. Go on,” interrupted the impatient Ludovic.

“Let me see,” continued the other suave. “It was this spring, very early in the season too, if my memory serves me right, that I heard an account of the little affair from a young friend in the State Department. It concerned an individual who was—er—who had the misfortune to be in the same condition with yourself regarding”—

“He was without hands?”

“Yes, just so. In a confidential report from our consul at Hong Kong, it was mentioned that this—er—handless individual, apparently a citizen of our own country, was mingling with the usually suspicious natives in a most remarkable manner. Chinese attaches of the consulate asserted that he spoke and wrote their own language and was in frequent conference with a number of suspected malefactors. In fact, the assumption seemed to

that he was engaged in fomenting rebellion among the many desperate characters who had fled for safety to the British-Chinese colony. Odd, is it not? A man without hands, more or less helpless, if you will pardon what may seem an indelicate reflection, participating in such dangerous work. And, moreover, successfully ingratiating himself with these barbarians. I have been told that even to learn the language, spoken and written, is a task of gigantic proportions for a foreigner."

"So I should imagine. Very interesting, this little anecdote of yours. Glad you thought of it. By the by, when do you go back to Washington?"

"Our session will not begin for some days yet," replied the lobbyist in true proprietary tones, "but I always make it a point to be on the spot with the earliest members. One never can tell what may turn up."

"Quite right," muttered Ludovic smilingly, and then to his hearer:

"Very well. It is important that we keep in close touch. In case of any unavoidable absences upon my part, you may consider the newly elected secretary of the Wow Chow Mud Bath Corporation, as my direct personal representative."

"The new secretary? I scarcely"—

"Chauncey Maguire is his name. He has *my entire confidence*. And now, I must request permission from you to withdraw. The

waiters have been instructed to serve the meal as ordered. Pray excuse the seeming lack of courtesy in your host and partake. Good day."

And without giving the usually loquacious lobbyist time to make answer, Ludovic withdrew from the apartment. The negro attendant awaited him in the hall and followed on after down to the carriage entrance, where an obsequious footman stood upon the curb alongside of a stylish equipage, while the coachman reined in his prancing charges.

"Woild, Telly, Joinal, sir," chirped a voice at Ludovic's elbow, as he raised one foot to mount the carriage step.

Zam wheeled round abruptly and peered intently at the newspaper vender. The latter ejaculated rapidly beneath his breath.

"Here, Harry," nervously cried the handless one, and turned to mutter a few words in a strange tongue to his sable attendant.

The latter calmly produced a great roll of bills and aided by the light from the lamps on the vehicle, counted out a certain number and passed them to the newsboy.

"Everything is going well," remarked Ludovic in a low tone of voice and then hastily climbed into the carriage.

The negro followed. The footman slammed the door shut viciously, and mounted beside his liveried mate. The vehicle rolled away, *and the hunchback* (for the newspaper vender *was thus afflicted*) remained alone upon the

sidewalk, with his disengaged hand full of money. Hearing someone approaching, he stealthily slipped the notes inside of his ragged jacket.

"Here, you, move along lively," commanded the bright-buttoned private watchman. "This ain't no paper stand. Slide!"

The hunchback cursed at the man and slowly ambled off.

Within an hour or so he chanced to be passing along lower Fifth avenue and saw the same dashing equipage draw up at the portal of an aristocratic apartment house. A richly liveried attendant threw open the plate glass doors. A glance could be had of the ornate hall decorations, giving promise of even more beyond. Ludovic entered the building, and his carriage rolled slowly stableward. The hunchback sniffed suspiciously, but hurried on about his business.

Just before midnight he turned into a shabby saloon, on a side street. The place, like most of its type, was a human hog-pen; the floor's saw-dust a dirty mass of mud, tobacco spit, and beer-drippings. The air reeked with the fumes of rank spirits, horrible tobacco, and dubious free lunch. The noisy customers were reluctantly taking their departure. One of them, unable to do much more than roll his eyes, was roughly dragged outdoors by the lusty bar-keeper and tossed on the sidewalk like a bag of grain.

The hunchback sat in an obscure corner,

stealthily crunching upon a few radishes which he had abstracted from the big bowl which formed the centrepiece of the free lunch counter.

"Hullo! Didn't see you at first, Harry," remarked the barkeeper yawningly, as he commenced to extinguish the more important lights.

The hunchback made some monosyllabic reply, and dragging forth a broom and a bucket of water from under the stairway, entered upon a vigorous cleansing of the floor and side walls.

"Good night," called the sleepy drawer, who having taken off his soiled apron and put on a coat, now stood at the outside door, key in hand.

"Good night, Tim," replied Harry. "You've been a good friend to me, Tim and"—

"Aw—g'wan with yer!"

The door shut. The key was turned in the lock and taken out. The retreating steps of the barkeeper could be heard along the stone paved sidewalk.

As soon as the hunchback had finished his task, he made a sort of a couch from some of the chairs and laid down upon it. But he was too excited to sleep. He could not even remain quiet. Searching about under the bar he finally discovered a section of the last Sunday's paper, and commenced glancing over it. Almost immediately, one of the sensational articles caught his eye.

There are any number of gradations in modern newspaper articles. While the conservative journals apparently rely upon abstract statements and keen surmises, with suitably modified adjectives and vocabulary, the more radical press appear to feel bound by no such limitations. To the latter, abstract statements become of minor account, and surmises, keen or otherwise, take on the robe of actuality. The evolutionary processes of these sensational articles may be best described as a series of mental jumpings. For instance: a youthful aspirant after reportorial honors, comes upon an individual who claims to be an exiled nobleman of the court of Svengen-Vinsten. The assumed peer hints that his royal master is not all that he should be. The young sleuth hastens to the enthroned editor, and, perhaps, unconsciously, trims up the gossip a trifle to suit the latter's advanced taste in such matters. This is jump number one. The editor now takes a short leap on his own account, by picking out the embellishments of the youngster and handing them over to a special man for proper arrangement. This latter individual is an expert in such jumping. In fact, he receives a big salary on account of this aptitude. Starting from the extreme outside edge of the editor's toe-prints, the special jumper hurls himself half across Mr. W. I. L. D. Conjecture's pasture lot. The article is printed with portraits, pictures from life, and headlines of circus poster type. The potentate of Svengen-Vinsten is

shown to be—well, anything. There is no limit to the possibilities. Sometimes, starting out with only a small insect, the article through successive jumpings upon the part of the men engaged upon it, becomes a treatise on elephants.

In the portion of the past Sunday's paper which Harry had found under the bar of the saloon, was an article headed: "The Handles Croesus." It purported to give a true and masterly account of the life and rapid-fortune getting of Ludovic Zam. His career as a tailor was noted, as well as the broad self-education and ambition to benefit his fellows. All so far as near truth as mild exaggeration can permit. But from this onward the journalistic jumping had given free rein to his leaping muscles. According to him, Zam's hands were lost in saving the life of a beautiful young heiress from threatening circular saw. The grateful girl who had promptly fallen in love with her rescuer, at once deeded over to him her entire fortune. In travelling through Asia, he had accidentally discovered a vast mountain of solid gold. He was about to marry a leading society woman, and so round out his career. The heiress had gone insane through jealousy. Zam many palatial residences, horses, yachts, and country estates were described. And so on and so forth; one grain of truth to ninety-nine of lies. All with portraits, pen drawings, personal interviews, and corroborative testimony put together with sufficient circumstances

to convince any jury amenable to that kind of evidence.

Harry read every word of the whole nightmare and devoured each fake picture in detail. Nay, went over it all half a dozen times. Then he threw the paper from him and meditated. After a while he took from his breast the crumpled notes and spread them out before him. Soon he began cursing and raving in accents frightful to hear. He quieted down in time and commenced muttering:

"He is a traitor. He must have deceived Ferguson—And they died for it!—Paugh!—This is his great plan?—All going well, he said to me when bribing my silence with a sop from his stealings—I should think so—All is going well with him, I warrant—Money makes money, they say, and I can well believe it—With that blood-money from the poor deluded starvelings he has managed to accumulate more. He lives in luxury—He, that with his great plan, written upon a slip of paper no larger than an envelope, was going to save us all!—I saw some of his dainties to-night, and I—am here."

For a long time the hunchback sat with head hung down, engaged in deep self-communion. Then he arose to his feet, and standing upon the floor of the foul-smelling saloon with arms upreached to heaven, cried:

"It shall be my task to learn more concerning *this* Ludovic Zam, and if I find that what I



believe is true, I vow, by the memory of the self-martyred heroes whom he so shamefully deluded, to bring vengeance upon him."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### IMPORTANT IF TRUE

"Certainly, Mr. Smythe," replied the suave bank president. "Two separate headings. One in the name of P. R. Smythe & Co., the other your private account with us, as heretofore."

"My own balance at the moment, is some seven or eight thousand dollars over a clear million?"

"Precisely. I cannot allow this opportunity to pass, without complimenting you upon this recent heavy business with you. While I, for one, have never doubted your ultimate success: it is peculiarly gratifying to see our predictions verified so promptly and bountifully."

"Thanks."

"Er"—remarked the banker with a knowing leer, "I think I can make a shrewd guess as to the company in your new firm. Would it be out of place to extend most hearty congratulations upon a certain rumored—er—approaching matrimonial event?"

"It would," replied the young man abruptly. "That is, at least, for the present."

Then he rushed away from the smiling and incredulous official.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THREE CHAPTERS IN ONE.

On board the steam yact "Vindacona," out in the middle of Long Island Sound. Blue sky overhead, dark blue water in the foreground, gray blue slightly fog-shrouded land miles distant from either quarter. Company under the awnings, lolling on chairs, camp stools, and cushioned hatches. Laughing, talking, singing, flirting, jesting; one minute like the grown-ups they are, the next with all the abandon of care-free children. White-jacketed steward appearing and disappearing with rays of changing variety. Suspicious small glasses for the gentlemen. Goblets of more innocent fluids, adorned with floating slices of orange, lemon or pineapple, and upright straws for the ladies. Cut glass bowls of wonderful sweetmeats, silver platters piled high withainty sandwiches, and individual plates bearing fruit of divers inviting sorts, for all. A cunning fellow, this steward, learned in the art of maintaining a whole catering establishment within the compass of two small cuddy closets and three little shelves.

Eunice Von Ruytman in scarlet, gold buttons, and anchor adornments; a sight to make a true sailor gnash his teeth and fall in love, at once and the same time. Mary Carnwood, a sweet picture in white. Other young ladies in purple and fine linen. Chaperoning matron *à la* *titto*. Straw hats, army felt caps, hats and

caps of wondrous color and shape, no hat at all. So much for the feminines. Men in vas shoes, duck trousers, dark double-breasted jackets, and cloth-visored caps. Some look the part, others openly impostors. B. Ho Dibbs instinctively clawing at the air snapping fingers when about to communicate anything he considers special. Ulysses George Fogarty, banjo upon knee, showing intimate acquaintance with every concert melody of the past decade. Other young men some fools, some the reverse, as in all gatherings. Phidias Rowell Smythe looking at Mary Carnwood, talking to and at Mary Carnwood sighing for Mary Carnwood's benefit, and otherwise comporting himself in a most ridiculous fashion. All cheeks rosy from the breezes, eyes sparkling with pleasure, and beaming in good nature. Small talk of intimate acquaintance at the moment but scarcely capable of standing the strain of being here set down, going coolly.

The yacht speeds along, leaving a trail of white-crested wavelets behind. Expensive and closely watched engines scarcely jar her stately figure. Engineers and firemen are below, hidden in the wheel-house with the pilot, and hands up bow. To all intents and purposes a jolly party have the ship to themselves.

"Big relief to get out of the sweltering city," remarks one young man.

Ulysses immediately commences singing  
"Theah'll be a hot time, in the old town  
night, my baby"——

"Yes, indeed," chimes in Eunice, who has spent but a single hour in New York during the past few months; "when we were driving across to the landing this morning, early as it was, I actually suffered from the glare of the sun."

"Imagine the poor people who must remain there all summer long," puts in Mary earnestly. "Is their lot not a hard one?"

"But they don't have to ride out in a brougham, with only a silk parasol for shelter," chirps the spoiled beauty. "They can remain in the shade and fan themselves."

"Any moah womances—er—adventchaws in tenementland, Miss Cawnwood?" queries Jlysses. "Nevah enjoyed anything so much in my life as that incident you told us about last yeah. Think it was at one of youah linnahs. B'lieve so. Fellaah stole money and got up ingenious stowey 'bout lot of dying men giving it to him."

"Take care, Fogey, old boy," puts in Smythe laughingly. "You'll make yourself subject to the laws of libel, if you don't be more careful."

"Beg youah pawdon?"

"Do you refer to Ludovic Zam, Mr. Forsarty?" inquired Mary hastily.

"Er—yes. . Ludovic Zam. Funny, by Jove! Seems as if I had heahed the name wecently."

"Don't doubt 't," assents Dibbs. "Ludovic Zam latest 'quisition t' th' street. Heavy *operations* in Wow Chow 'mong others."

"Same fellah stole"—

"There you go again, Fogey."

"I—er—appeal to Miss Cawnwood?"

"As far as my personal opinion is concerned, I do not think he was a thief. I was satisfied with his explanation."

"Fellah had no feet or"—

"Both hands cut off in a street car accident," corrects Smythe.

"Oh, yes. I wemember now. Pwesurne fwom odd name must be same fellah."

"Undoubtably."

"Wemarkable! Must be bwight fella h, vewy. Astonishing! Cawn't you tell us su another adventuah, Miss Cawnwood?"

"I'm afraid not. I have been forbidden to visit the tenement district recently," remarks Mary, rather mournfully.

"Fowbidden?"

"Yes, it is papa's wish that I discontinu even my trivial journeys thitherward. However, he allows me an additional sum to dispense at second-hand. So, perhaps, the poor people are really benefitted by my absence."

"Perhaps!" ejaculated Smythe.

"We'll be rounding Orient Point in ten minutes," cries one of the men.

"Would you not like to come up on the bridge, Miss Carnwood?" eagerly questions Phidias. "The view through the Gut is quite pretty."

"Oh, it will be lovely," chimes in the unconscious Eunice. "Let us all go? I just adore

scenery. I remember eating breakfast at a mountain hotel in the Jungfrau. There was an awfully funny-looking little Frenchman at the next table to us. He"—

But the clatter of the chairs, as the steward folds them out of the way, and the rustling of dresses as the gallants escort their fair ones along the deck, drowns her reminiscence.

Mary Carnwood leads the laughing mob and melts the brusque old captain with her sunny smile. Smythe is close at her heels, inwardly breathing all kinds of ill fortune upon Eunice Von Ruytman.

Scarcely have they passed though the short race and headed up bay when Mary puts both hands to her wind-tossed hair, and exclaims: "Oh dear, I've left my hat down where we've been sitting."

"I'll bring it to you," volunteers one deck-hand, the captain, Smythe, and two of the other men, in a single breath.

"No, no. I can get it for myself," she returns, laughingly, but with a most graceful intonation to her voice, and a specially appreciative smile towards the sailors.

She trips lightly aft. Smythe follows undauntedly. Some of the others make a half-step in the same direction, but draw back. Smythe is delighted. He has been trying for five hours to have a few words in private with the lovely girl. Now seems to be his chance. Alas, no. The "plunk" of a banjo comes to his ear. *The unappreciative youth, Ulysses, to*

whom, moreover, Gardiner's bay is as a tale that has been many times told, is singing to his own accompaniment, something about "ain't gwine to work no more!"

"Did you say anything?" questions Mary as an ejaculation escapes from between the clenched teeth of the investigator.

Smythe laughs nervously but immediately dives for the hat and so saves himself.

"You're missing the sights, Mr. Fogarty," the girl exclaims as she adjusts the saucy-looking confection to her head.

Fogarty throws down his instrument and rises lazily.

"Yes, fogey, old boy. Fine view from the bridge," urges Smythe in appealing tones.

"Come along," cries Mary heartily, leading the way; "we are losing a good deal."

Fogarty hastenes after her. Smythe kicks an unoffending chair and follows.

The "Vindacona" steams past the Hay Beach lighthouse, that quaintly spick and span French roofed cottage set up on a spindly iron framework. The wooded shores draw nearer together. Homes, high and lowly, dot the landscape. The water is more and more alive with small craft. Steam whistles reply to one another. The big hotel buildings loom up. The town of Greenport shows itself upon the right hand. They glide past the end of the beaconed breakwater, and make a graceful curve into Deering Harbor. The little brass cannon upon the fore-deck barks out. The

alute is answered from the shore station. Speed slackens as they thread among the many moored or moving pleasure craft, both steam and sail. The anchor drops with a splash, and soon their gallant yacht, with banked fires, swings upon the surface of that sheltered haven.

"We've got an hour or so before dinner," remarks somebody. "Who votes for a stroll on the island?"

"Odahed my twap to be on the lookout loah us," chirps Ulysses, who is gazing intently shoreward. "Theah it is. Woom for seven or eight. Might as well take a little spin."

"Cutter is ready, sir," reports the captain, with a touch of hand to cap to Horatio.

"Here's papa," calls Mary excitedly, as a luxurious launch steams up to the gangway.

Mr. Carnwood reposes in the stern-sheets and waves his hand languidly. He has come down from the city by train and is pretty well tired out from the two-hour ride in the private compartment of a parlor car.

There is quite a little bustle as the seamen put travelling cases and steamer trunks aboard the small boats. Some start away for the cottages, others for the hotels. Most of the men, however, are to voyage further upon the yacht. Ulysses has some difficulty in making up a party to give his new and elaborate *quipage a trial*, but finally succeeds. Among



those who accept his invitation are Carnwood and Phidias Rowell Smythe. The latter, with an amount of generalship short of marvelous, secures a seat beside multi-millionaire's daughter.

The party converse in monosyllables as pass noisily along the cottage-streets. Once the open country gained, however, they repeat their mer triumphs on board the yacht. It is chatter and laughter to the accompaniment this time, of the roll of wheels, clatter of hoofs, jingle of harness, and hiss of the whip which Ulysses handles so skillfully.

"What a perfectly lovely spot!" ejaculates Mary to her companion, pointing toward the vine-clad cottage set upon a hillside, facing the bay and surrounded with rolling fields and woodland. "'For sale,'" she continues, pointing out a big, glaring sign to that effect. "'Roseland Cottage.'" A sweet name, don't you think, don't you?"

"Do you really admire the place?" She asks questions.

"Yes," wonderingly. "Indeed I do. It is so like, and yet so unlike, our dear old home in Kansas."

"Hi! Fogey" calls Smythe. "Stop a minute will you?"

The obliging ex-banjoist presses down upon his brake iron. The horses rear up and slacken their gait in answer to the tight-

reins. The grooms leap off and rush to the bridles. The coach comes to a standstill.

"Thanks, old chap. Just a minute, please," yells Smythe, and hastily dismounting, commences running towards the cottage.

"Well, I never!"

"What is it?"

"By Jove, you know!"

"Weally, I am supwised!"

The coach party are more or less human.

A middle-aged, sharp-featured man appears at the door of the little house as Smythe comes dashing up. The following colloquy ensues:

"How much?" from the panting investigator.

No answer. Merely an opening of eyes in evident amazement.

"How much?"

"Hay?"

"Are you the owner of this place?"

"Y—e—es sir, I be."—

"The sign says it's for sale?"

"Waal, yew see when ole Cap'n Jake Tut-hill went"—

"How much do you want for it?"

"Eh! You thinkin' "—

"Yes, yes. What's your price?"

"It's all prime land. Barn needs a leetle mite o' "—

"Never mind that. What's your price?"

"No need o' gettin' riled 'bout it, neighbor. I"—

"Don't you see that coaching party out on the road is waiting for me? I'm in a hurry. I want to buy if the price suits. What do you want for it?"

"I'd sell the house, barn, and enough land to"——

"No, I want the farm, just as it is."

"Gosh all hemlocks! There's a matter of twenty-two and a third acres. Most on it's woodland, but"——

"For pity's sakes, man, will you tell me your price?"

"It ain't natral to come ranting around like this. How do I know if you've got the money?"

"Here's five hundred dollars," showing the amount. "You will get the rest from my lawyer, after the deeds have been properly looked into and fixed up."

"Gee-whilikens! I took seven years 'fore I made up my mind to buy Deacon Reeves's pasture lot."

"Well, well, will you kindly tell me your price for the place?"

"Fi—Five thousand."

"Dollars even?"

"Yes, I might"——

"Done, for five thousand dollars. Here's the earnest money."

Smythe thrusts the bills into the hands of *the* astounded islander, and sprints back to *the* waiting party.

"Thought you weah going to have fight with the old fellah," remarks Ulysses, as he gathers up the reins, and the impatient horses leap ahead once more.

Smythe volunteers no information regarding his erratic conduct.

"If that don't beat Boniker!" mutters the ex-proprietor, as he gazes after the fast vanishing coach. "And everybody knows that Boniker beats the devil. I'd have taken off a clear thousand, if he'd only stopped to dicker."

\* \* \* \* \*

Lights blaze, jewels flash, music sounds, voices echo, dresses rustle, eyes sparkle, all is gaiety. Over the big waxed floor of the pavilion trip hundreds of pairs of daintily shod feet. Toilettes there are in bewildering variety, but all, however simple looking, of cost. Palms, flowers and rich draperies deck the scene. A galaxy of all ages; male and female; beautiful, plain and ugly; is gathered here. It is one of the regular weekly "hops" of the fashionable summer hotel.

Our party from the "Vindacona" is well represented. Horatio has been doing the agreeable for over an hour to a fat dowager who is said to dabble in stocks upon occasion. A scholar of parts, who is also a scion of a wealthy house, is nearly captivated by Eunice Von Ruytman's personal beauty, despite her shallowness in every other particular. Ulysses St. George Fogarty is being fought for by a half hundred lovely girls. Members of our

chorus also abound, playing their petty parts in most admirable fashion.

Mary Carnwood and Phidias Rowell Smythe are waltzing with the rest. The dance ends — They stroll out upon the broad veranda — There are numberless couples around them —

"Seems to be no dew. Let us walk down the point path?" pleads Phidias.

The girl assents. They soon reach the grassy knoll. Here are the awning-like tents utilized for midday siestas. Behind them, the great hotel buildings all alight, verandas crowded with laughing and chattering guests. In front, the rippling waters of the bay, with its countless dots of illumination from anchored craft and little town beyond. Above, the starry canopy, the lordly earth's attendant planet bathing all with its silvery glow.

"How beautiful!" murmurs the girl, as she rests trustfully upon the investigator's arm.

"Miss Carnwood—Mary," he begins abruptly. "I have tried all day to find opportunity to speak. I love you. I have loved you for a long time. Only the fear of being considered a fortune-hunter has delayed this proposal. Your father knows my intentions and has approved, subject to your wishes. I am at the present moment honestly able to call myself a millionaire. I am worth a million dollars. Not very much more, but still a square million. Will you have me for a husband?"

"I—I am so sorry," begins the girl hysterically.

"Sorry?"

"Yes. You had no need to gain wealth for my favor."

"What do you mean, darling?"

"I have long determined never to marry anybody but a poor man"——

"You are surely joking, Mary. As far as that goes, I can readily squander my small wealth away, or, better yet, endow some deserving charity with it."

"That would only be half?"

"Half? Half of what?"

"You did not wait for me to finish. In addition to only marrying a poor man, I have also made up my mind never to marry, excepting I am poor myself."

"You! The Carnwood heiress! Surely this is but jesting?"

"I was never more serious in my life, Mr. Smythe."

"You decline my offer of marriage?"

"I—I must. I cannot go into details regarding reasons. They would doubtless scarcely appeal to masculine logic. I have"——

"But, Miss Carnwood, Mary, although you refuse, you speak—pardon me the presumption—but you have failed to say that my love is not returned?"

"No, nor will I say that."

"You do care for me?"

"Yes, but—even if people do not hear our voices, many can see us.—I do care for you. If we were both poor, I would esteem it the greatest honor in the whole world to be your wife. If"——

"Hsh!"

"What?"

"I fancied that I heard somebody groaning, but it must have been imagination."

"Here comes a lot of people down the path. Please take me in? The music has commenced again, and I promised this dance with Mr. Fogarty."

"Your answer, your cruel answer to me final?"

"It—it is."

"Mary, Mary, do not wreck the happiness of both our lives for a mere whim?"

"Listen. Mr. Smythe—Phidias—money a curse"——

"Lack of it, the same."

"That is a platitude, unworthy of you. I—I cannot explain myself. But know this: Mine is no whim. It is the result of much thought—much study—and much prayer. We must part in now—Why Eunice," to another couple who have just drawn near; "you have a wrap?"

"Mr. Maddersfield has been so entertaining that I have not felt chilled, dear. Telling me all about the ancient—What were they? Germans? Greeks? Oh, yes, how stupid of me to forget so quickly. I remember Hercules

Did he not discover a gilded sheep skin or something? I do think"——

The voices die away in the distance.

A man rises up from out the lounging chair beneath one of the nearby tents. A man with face all drawn and ghastly. A man who grinds his teeth and whispers alternately, meanwhile stalking steadily onward away from the festive scene. "She loves him," mutters the man from time to time, as he goes. The mutterer is Chauncey Maguire.

## CHAPTER X.

### FOOLISH OR WISE.

About half past ten o'clock in the morning, Phidias Rowell Smythe alighted from the express at Long Island City and took ferry for New York. He landed at James Slip and no cabs happening to be in sight, started to walk downtown. While passing through a side street, the sign in a little stationary store window, attracted his attention. It read:

#### Writing Conveniences for Customers.

He smiled, entered, purchased a grimy india-rubber eraser from the very stout German lady who presided behind the counter; *and at request*, was accommodated with a rusty *pen* and some surreptitious dips from out the



ink bottles that were on sale. In spite of the disadvantages, together with the barefaced curiosity of the shop-mistress, Phidias drew out his check book and filled in and signed a slip for one million dollars, payable to his own order. This he endorsed. Carefully blotting the valuable piece of paper, he wadded it into a crumpled ball.

Some minutes later, while continuing his progress downtown, he paused before a wretched looking creature, who was engaged devouring a mouldy crust of bread.

"Have you any particular use for a million dollars?" Smythe queried desperately. "He is a check for that amount which I believe you can readily negotiate."

"Rats! Wot y' toik me for? A come-on!" cried the vagrant superciliously, giving but a hasty glance at the crumpled piece of paper. The investigator's extended hand, and eyeing the well-dressed questioner greedily. "Make it a dime, gov'nor; and see how quick I can grab for it?"

Smythe turned on his heel and strode away. The loafer abused him roundly.

A block or two further on, Phidias carelessly tossed the crumpled check into the gutter, and hastened off. Only to return a few minutes later, however, and pick it up again. As he did so, a poorly clad creature, a hunchback with features all twisted and distorted from passion, came into collision with him.

"Beg pardon," cried Smythe regretfully.

"This piece of paper probably belongs to you?"

"No, it don't."

"You were about to pick it up."

"Well, what if I was? There's no law as yet against anybody reaching for a scrap of paper along the public highway, I hope."

"Here. Take it."

"Keep it yourself, now you've got it."

"See," straightening the slip out. "A check for one million dollars properly endorsed. Take it."

"Any fool can scribble a check for ten times the amount."

"I'll give you a five dollar bill if you'll take the thing?"

The hunchback snorted, peered all around over his shoulders at the few people and teams in sight as if he suspected a trap of some kind, snatched the money out of Smythe's hand, examined it upon both sides, accepted the crumpled check with no special grace, and darted with speed surprising from one of his infirmity, into an adjacent alleyway.

"There is one half the obstacle to my marriage with Mary Carnwood removed," said Smythe grimly to himself. "Now for the other."

## ANOTHER INTERLUDE.

Having, like its predecessor, but little to do with the special story in hand. \* \* \* \*

The previous dissertation of this nature was broken off abruptly with the idea that, perhaps, it had served a purpose. In other words, that, perchance, the calling up to mind of the various characters as written, with the opportunity for retrospection given, however brief, might have, in a way, answered for the book-writer's lack of an act drop substitute. However this may be, it is obvious that the device is not such a one as would successfully bear repetition. This author is perfectly willing to acknowledge that he has been unable to fill the want pointed out, but study and thought upon the subject has convinced him that only the difficulty of disturbing the traditional conventionalities of book-making has prevented a satisfactory solution being discovered. Poetry, the drama, works of reference, guides to travel, magazines, newspapers and many other departments of literature have been vastly improved, in their manner of exposition at least, in modern days; but fiction writing, from the same point of view, has stood absolutely stock still. Even the street story-tellers of China relate their several thousand year old classics in a succession of divisions like chapters, and with plot, char-

ters, and climax in the fashion of the very latest novels from the pens of our leading authors. If this first introduction between covers of the want of an act drop substitute in fiction should serve as an entering wedge for a more logical method to be devised by others, it will have served its main purpose.

And now this writer will take the opportunity usually accorded to the dramatist, of making his little speech, just before the beginning of the last act.

"This book is not intended to be a sermon nor yet a 'penny dreadful.' Judge not altogether by first impressions. Sometimes a plain story is deeper than a more pretentious one, and sometimes not. I hope that the final chapter may exceed all your expectations. For your courtesy, I crave you to accept my thanks."

And again the curtain rises.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A LOGICAL GUESS.

This chapter must necessarily be incomplete. It is far easier to draw logical deductions mentally, than to set them out in proper array upon paper. However, knowing what we do, it can be positively stated that Ludo Zam, at this stage of his career, was followed and spied upon by many. Some of these were so for utterly selfish purposes; others, for better motives. Among these spies was one that is hard to catalogue. He can best be described as possessed of a certain spirit; a spirit not entirely evil, yet certainly far from being wholly good. Such seemingly contradictory natures are more common than is generally conceded. They may be found in both penitentiaries and churches. The color of their goodness or badness depends, like changeable silk, upon the light or position in which they are viewed or held. Such natures are the despair of pedants and joy of philosophers. The former cannot understand a case where two and two does not make four; the latter are well pleased to find a reason for their ignorance.

He whom we have thus briefly commented upon was the hunchback. We only know him by his first name of Harry. In order to accomplish his very complete system of espionage

age upon Ludovic Zam he undoubtedly spent money profusely. His hired and bribed assistants were many. Even some of Zam's personal attendants were probably in the hunchback's pay. But the latter was extremely active. No matter what the hour or where the direction of Zam's most uncertain flittings Harry was sure to be close behind. He used all sorts of disguises, conveyances, and hiding places, and scarcely seemed to lose an instant through sleep. The hunchback was a creature of moods. Now mild and gentle, following Zam with love and sympathy beaming from every pore, as if he took a proud interest in some worthy doings of the handless one. Or, perhaps, sullen and sulky, evidently perplexed, suspicious, uncertain. Again, the hunchback's teeth would gnash with rage, his eyes dart murderous glances, and his lips breathe, if they did not actually pour forth, the same horrible and unmentionable curses which they had done at Winkleman's Hall during the last convocation of the Allied Councils.

As a dog walks to his master's heel, as a guilty child follows a parent to the looted cupboard, and as a hungry man-eater slinks behind the unsuspecting native, waiting only for a chance to make the deadly spring: so followed Harry, the hunchback, after Ludovic Zam. He was dog, child, or tiger, according to mood. Sometimes all three within as many *minutes*.

From the money given him by Zam, the hunchback turned over twenty dollars to Tim, his Samaritanlike friend. When, to Harry's astonishment, he had actually negotiated the check which Smythe bribed him to accept, he mailed the barkeeper a registered package, containing a sum which well-nigh set the Milesian's head to spinning.

Harry, the hunchback, now had ample capital with which to purchase food, clothes, and men.

## CHAPTER XII.

### PULLING THE WIRES.

Chauncey Maguire stood in the doorway of a private office, gazing absent-mindedly at his nervously moving fingers. Every now and again a bitter smile flashed over the ex-news-paperman's face, to be almost immediately supplanted by a scowl of anger. Behind him, upon the centre table, was a dress-suit case, and beside it lay his hat, gloves, and light overcoat. In spite of all rumored disaster to the Wow Chow Mud Bath Corporation, Limited, was apparently doing a big business. In plain view from where the new secretary stood, were many tall desks, each one illuminated by its special electric globe and occupied by a more or less industrious clerk. From behind the glass partition, at the further end of the big apartment, sounded the click and rattle of typewriting machines. A uniformed port-

had entered bearing a huge bag of mail, which he was engaged in dumping upon a broad sorting table.

Suddenly, the richly glazed door of the main entrance flew open and a stout, middle-aged gentleman, with flushed face and excited action, came bouncing along. The messenger flung wide the little railing portal and the new-comer made no pause in his swift descent upon the secretary.

"How d'do, Burnham," remarked Chauncey familiarly, but without any special cordiality of tone, at the same time drawing back sufficiently to allow the inward passage of the unofficial member of Congress. Upon the latter's entrance into the sanctum the other promptly closed the door behind them.

"You received my wire?" began the new-comer, throwing himself into a capacious easy chair as he spoke, and commencing to mop his perspiring forehead.

"Yes, yes. You seem to be in a hurry?"

"I have come—er—post haste from the Capitol, sir. No expense spared, I assure you. Cab, express train, and cab to your very door. I never allow personal considerations of health or—er—comfort, to stand in the way of duty to my constituents—er—that is to say, clients, sir."

"And now that you have come, may I inquire the reason of such impatience?" went on Chauncey calmly.

"Your note advising me that you intended



to accompany Mr.—er—Zam—our mutual patron—er—and my most liberal client”——

“That we expected to be absent from the city for a while? What of it?”

“The way things are going, sir, I believe it would be unwise to leave me alone, even for only a few weeks as I believe you mention to—er—bear the brunt of these—extraordinary developments.”

“You put it nicely,” remarked Maguire smilingly.

“Yes, sir,” went on Alonzo Burnham, sagging his head and repeating the phrase as if proud of it; “extraordinary developments.”

Chauncey was silent.

“Mark you,” continued the professional lobbyist, “I request no specific explanations.”

Chauncey smiled again.

“I may or I may not have a good idea of your purposes,” continued the unofficial member of Congress, in a manner which plainly showed that he did not but would like to have; “but refrain from pushing myself forward as a confidant of—er—Mr. Zam. I simply agreed to do, that is, endeavor to accomplish certain—work. Upon this subject and this alone concentrate my best efforts. To a liberal client I am never niggardly in either quality or quantity of my—er—special lines; and may say that Mr. Zam is—er—most generous. Most generous, sir. All very satisfactory in that direction, I beg to assure you, and I

u will impress the substance of what I have  
id upon him."

"But you certainly never 'came all the way  
om Washington to tell me this? Go on."

"I—er—I do not think it wise for both you  
d Mr. Zam to be absent at this time."

"You do not?"

"I do not."

"Why?"

"There are—er—things coming up which  
y require more explanation than I can give.  
at is, more satisfactory and—er—logical  
planations."

"In what way, Mr. Burnham?"

"My dear Mr. Maguire, we should be open  
d frank in our relations with one another."

"What do you mean?"

"Now don't get angry, my dear sir, I beg of  
u."

"I am not angry. Merely curious as to the  
use of your evident trepidation."

"Er—you must pardon it. But really, Mr.  
aguire, I am being placed in a most delicate  
almost a hazardous position."

"How so?"

"I am—er—retained by—er—Mr. Zam to  
atch over the interests of your company at  
e national capital. In other words, to see  
at Congress does not—er—interfere with  
ur operations."

"Precisely. Continue."

*All this has been easy enough so far, but I*

am now confronted with—er—a situation—that I was scarcely led to expect.”

“Your fees are generous, as I think you have admitted upon more than one occasion.”

“And I cheerfully do so again.”

“You just stated that you have not been called upon for any special efforts, as yet.”

“Yes, yes. Understand me. I am anxious and willing to—er—continue our mutual relations, but I scent danger ahead in which even my influence—by no means trivial, I can assure you—may not be sufficiently powerful.”

“Why not tell me exactly what you mean instead of going through all this circumlocutory folderol?”

“Er—I am informed, upon reliable authority, sir, that your company is enlisting men and soldiers. As soldiers, sir, for active service in Asia.”

“Of course. Nothing more natural. The establishment at Wow Chow has been destroyed by insurgents. We do not propose to rebuild until there is a sufficient force upon the spot to prevent another recurrence of the same trouble.”

“But this is not all. It is stated that you have ordered a quantity of war material, sir?”

“It is also intended for Wow Chow.”

“But you should be aware that the filibustering regulations are very stringent? If once official attention of Congress is called to the operations it may be impossible to restrain

House from interfering with your plans?"

"What right has Congress to interfere, may I ask?"

"China is a friendly nation, sir, at the present moment. Whatever position the European aggressors may take in regard to occupying portions of her domain, the United States most certainly will not—er—permit any American citizens to utilize private forces for"——

"But how about our charter?"

"Charter?"

"Yes, our charter from the Chinese government itself. In other words our concession?"

"I don't quite see your point but am ready to be convinced."

"By the terms of our charter we are specifically entitled to police and administer affairs upon our ten thousand acres of land at Wow Chow."

"Ah!"

"Heretofore we have had a few constables."

"Armed?"

"I presume so, but whether with revolvers or merely clubs I do not know."

"You will now have battalions of drilled soldiery?"

"Such is our intention. Also, some ship-ping."

"What? Not war vessels?"

"Of course. Our tract of land abuts upon the coast. I believe the company possessed a *steam* launch at one time."

"I begin to comprehend."

"In order to satisfactorily police a territory under constant danger of attack in force of hordes of rebels, we merely increase our protective establishment. All in strict accordance with the agreement between the Chinese government and the Wow Chow Mud I Corporation."

"I am much relieved. This puts the matter in a vastly different light."

"I want to impress one thing on your mind."

"And what may it be?"

"Under our charter the Wow Chow can raise up a whole army and navy, if it sees fit to do so. But, while strictly within our legal rights it might be as well to keep this idea in the background, as much as possible."

"Of course, of course. Trust me. Politics—that's the shibboleth. Ha-ha! I am somewhat of a soldier myself. Ha-ha! I do as I am bid and ask no reasons."

"And receive the emoluments of half a dozen generals rolled into one, for so doing?"

"Ha-ha! Just as you say, Mr. Maguire. Just as you say. Ha-ha! But I am discreet in language. That is where I differ from my brave fighters. Listen, I have something to tell you."

"The plot thickens."

"Nothing serious, my dear sir. Not at any rate. I am not even sure of any connection with our mutual affairs, although I may surmise. Know that there is cons

able talk—in—er—official circles, sir, about the really immense shipments of all manner of war material from America to various parts of the world."

"What special kinds of war material? The items of such a classification in these modern days are well nigh limitless."

"All kinds, including a great deal of structural iron and steel work, undoubtedly intended for war vessels, sir. Arms and ammunition, sir, in considerable quantities; and, moreover, strong suspicions of heavy shipments of the same in disguised packages."

"This is not public talk as yet?"

"No, no, sir. Official suspicions, sir. That is all, so far. Not likely to come out unless new features are developed."

"Very good. I'm glad that we understand one another. I presume that now you see no objections to my being absent from this office for a few weeks?"

"With—er—Mr. Zam?"

"Yes. He and I will be together."

"Can I have an address so as to be able to communicate with you if occasion should absolutely require?"

"I do not see any necessity for it."

"Well, well, just as you say. I must bustle back to Washington. I trust you can appreciate that even your police force—Ha-ha! will necessitate considerable—er—diplomacy upon my part?"

"I presume so. There is still a large amount

to your credit in the company's secret service fund. I believe there is nothing more to say.

"Er—I—think—not. No, I presume not.

"Good bye, Mr. Burnham."

"Good—good-bye, sir; and a pleasant trip to you both."

The two men shook hands in a perfunctory sort of fashion and separated. Seated in the comfortable cab on his way to the ferry, the unofficial member of Congress thought: "E—that good-bye of Maguire's sounded rather like—a real farewell."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE POINTING OF THE STRAWS.

"'Nother round, Tim."

"Beer?"

"Sure."

"Yep."

"Same."

"I meldt sixty queens."

"Gimme a smoke, will yer?"

"D-d-deece of t-trumps."

"Doc must have the other."

"How'd you guess it, you prize-fightin' fakir?"

"Jack o' spades."

"L-l-l-look out f-f-for Sheeny's next l-l-lead.

"Play the king. He ain't workin'."

"Twenty pair."

"Go ahead and meldt, Slug."

"Keep your lamps off my pictures."

"Easy there on that butt."

"Why don't you keep your—feet off my"—

"Play cards!"

"There's your pinochle queen."

"Mark me for that hundred aces."

"P-p-put s-s-something on this."

"Here y' are. Hooray! Ace, king, queen, jack—Where in—is that—ten? Gimme two fifty."

"Hold on."

"Time."

"This 'is Sheeny's treat. It can't happen every day."

"I don't know. I've seen warmer ones than you."

The bartender distributed the big schooners of foaming liquid around the table and held out his hand for the money. The players had laid down the bedraggled and greasy cards and were already clutching their glasses. The scorer had slipped the piece of chalk, with which he had been marking the counts upon one margin of the table's surface, into his up-turned hat.

"Cough up the dough, Ikey," cried Tim, curtly.

The individual addressed had one hand in his vest pocket and seemed to be in difficulties. After much fumbling he reluctantly drew forth a small roll of bills, held tightly together by an elastic band. Extracting therefrom a



single specimen, he tendered it to the bar-keeper.

"Hully gee!"

"Look at Sheeny's wad!"

"I saw it first," yelled the humorist of the party, grabbing for the little roll after the fashion of a playful battering-ram.

"Not on your necktie," chirped Ikey, holding fast to his money and savagely pushing the funny man away from him.

"Humph!" grunted Tim, in evident surprise. "Where'd you catch that?"

"Same place you got the price for the sparkler," retorted the young Hebrew, pointing with one dirty forefinger at the blazing jewel stuck ostentatiously in the barkeeper's gaudy necktie.

"Hey?"

"From Harry, the hunchback. The fellow that used to do your dirty work here in exchange for a place to sleep."

"It's a lie," growled Tim desperately.

"Don't give us another game of talk about that actress being stuck on you."

"The beer is spoiling."

"Here's lookin' at you."

"D-d-drink hearty."

With much blowing aside of froth and noisy gurgling, the trashy brewing was swallowed down. The individual addressed as Doc, produced a rag of a handkerchief from some mysterious pocket in his shabby clothing, and wiped his lips and moustache. The other

used the sleeves of their jackets for the same purpose.

"Set 'em up again," cried Ikey grandiloquently.

"No you don't. This one will be on the house," declared the barkeeper.

"Irish has got heart-disease, sure," shouted the would-be prize fighter.

"Tim, y-y-you're all r-r-right."

"I'll take champagne."

"Yes you will. You'll take beer or nothing."

"I guess I'll have a Manhattan."

"Guess again."

"Whose pony?"

"Shut up, can't you. It's Tim's. He ain't no hog."

"Shut up yourself."

"Drink first and fight afterwards, do you hear?"

Meanwhile, the barkeeper with professional alacrity had caught up the glasses, refilled them at the polished brass tap, and again served around.

"Gentlemen of the Boiled Lobster Gang," commenced Doc, gravely rising to his feet, schooner in hand, "it affords me the greatest pleasure to propose the health, long life, and good fortune, of our genial friend and host, Mr. Timothy Mac"—

"Cheese your gab," interrupted the barkeeper. "It's my turn. Here's to Harry, the

hunchback, who didn't let prosperity make him forget an old pal."

The toast was drunk in silence.

"Where—where is our young friend now living?" questioned Doc.

"I dunno," replied Tim shortly.

"Has he made a big strike?"

"Dunno," returned the barkeeper. "He sent me some—a present. Said it was in return for my kindness. That's all I know about him so it's no use trying to pump me."

"Tr—tr—trust a hunchback for b-b-better lucky, every t-t-time."

"Why ain't the rest of us in on the lay? Didn't we make up a Christmas present for him last year?"

"Yes. Fifty cents."

"And you borrowed it from him right afterwards."

"I paid it back again."

"Yes you did."

"Well, I did. Ask Tim?"

"That's right. Doc returned it to him."

"Come on. Ain't we playing pinochle?"

"Say, Ikey. Is he a real winner?"

"Who?"

"Ah—who? Why, Harry, of course."

"Yes."

"On the level."

"Straight goods."

"What is his address?" interposed Doc blandly, at the same time producing a stub of a lead pencil and a tattered note book.

"Say, do you think I'm going to give my graft away?" retorted Ikey contemptuously. "Nit!"

"Do you know where to find Harry?" persisted Doc, taking a pair of cheap eye-glasses from his pocket and adjusting them upon his nose.

"Yes, I do, and what's more, I'm going to keep it to myself, see;" snapped the Hebrew.

"Gentlemen of the Boiled Lobster Gang," commenced he of the eye-glasses, rising to his feet in order to assume an oratorical attitude, and addressing the audience generally. "On my way to our place of meeting this afternoon, I was an unwilling witness to a most painful sight."

The speaker paused in order to produce and ostentatiously wipe his bleared eyes with the tag of a handkerchief. Some of his audience laughed outright. The rest merely grinned applause.

"Gentlemen," continued Doc, "I know that you will share my feelings of sympathy and commiseration when I inform you that the Henderson family—the family of Dopey Henderson—are about to be evicted from their tenement apartments for non-payment of rent. For the sake of a miserable pittance of three dollars and some odd cents, the little home circle, the head and—er—stay of which, may be entitled an associate member of our own delightful fraternity, is to be broken up and disrupted. Is this right? I appeal to your

sense of honor, is it right that this should take place while we possess it to prevent? I read the answer in your ciative silence. It is not right. quickly dropping from his sonorous and directly addressing the young "as your contribution to this worth will you take a note from us to Harry member the act costs you nothing, little otherwise unemployed time. 'do this much towards alleviating the of a fellow-member?"

"Ah, g'wan. What you givin' us."

"Will you take and deliver my note late honored—er—er—"

"Cuspidor cleaner!"

"Shut up!"

"Will you take a note to Harry, the back?"

"Maybe."

"We're all in, mind you," chorused the miring crowd.

"Except Tim. He's got more share already."

"Tim'll get the most of ours in the."

"And we'll have the drinks and smokes. That's fair enough."

"Hold on with your wrangling. (a chance."

"Is he good for ten on a charity lot?" questioned the individual of the eye *looking up from the scrap of paper upon which he was operating with the piece of*

The barkeeper nodded his head assentingly, while a smile of amusement stole over his face.

"Ten plunks ain't much for this gang. Sheeny's got pretty nearly that in his wad."

"But I worked for mine."

"And we're going to work Harry for this. That's the difference."

"Ten ain't enough."

"Shut up. It's a blame sight more than we've seen in a lump for one while."

"Here's the toucher," gasped Doc, who had been rapidly scribbling without paying any attention to the altercation around him.

Ikey caught up the missive and read it aloud to the vocally appreciative audience.

"'Honored sir,'"—

"'Hully gee!'"

"'It will no doubt distress you to learn that the family of Mr. Henderson'"—

"The lazy devil."

"'—whom you will doubtless recall as a frequent visitor to Tim's saloon'"—

"'Whenever he had the price of a beer.'"

"'—is about to be evicted for non-payment of rent. The members of the Boiled Lobster Gang have endeavored to make up a purse to provide against this social catastrophe; but, in spite of most heroic self-denial and extreme generosity, still lack Thirteen dollars and twenty-four cents (\$13.24) from'"—

"Good idea to put the amount in both letters and figures. He can't mistake it."

"Right you are, Doc."

"Go on, Ikey."

"Where was I. Oh, yes,—‘from the required amount. May we ask your generous aid in this extremity? Your most obedient servants, the Boiled Lobster’"—

"Thought you were only going to strike him for a ten?"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," urbanely remonstrated Doc. "Pray remember that we are pledged to relieve this unfortunate family. It will require something over three dollars for the purpose. The balance—ahem! Whatever balance may remain when this has been accomplished will"—

"If Doc ain't the limit."

"It's all right, fellers. We'll treat the Hendersons' square."

"Three cheers for Doc."

"I'll be back in an hour," put in the Hebrew, starting for the door as he spoke.

"Hold on," shouted Slug. "How do you know that Ikey won't slope with the whole blame thing?"

"That's so."

"We don't want any monkey business."

"I'll put up my wad with Tim here, as security," frankly volunteered the messenger, producing the roll and handing it over to the bookkeeper.

"Good."

"Let her go, Sheeny."

"Slide."

Off ran the Hebrew.

The others turned to their card-playing gain, in order to pass away the time until their messenger's return. Tim washed and wiped glasses, in expectation of the coming demands upon his drawing abilities.

"Did you really mean that 'bout paying the Henderson's rent from our coin, Doc?" put in one of the players, a little while later.

"Yes, and I'll tell you why," affirmed the ye-glass one, slamming a card down upon the lippy table. "Ten of clubs! Ikey would ever have taken the note without that bait. I heldt eighty kings."

"Why?"

"He's shining around one of the Henderson girls, and thinks this will make him solid there, without costing a cent."

"Blamed if you ain't cute enough for a"——

"Hullo! Here's Dopey himself."

A big, strong, able-bodied man, but with bleared eyes and shaking limbs, came tottering up to the bar and muttered something to Tim. Only a few words about 'forth' loveo God' and 'whs'ky,' were audible. The drawer planked a bottle and glass down before him. The intruder mumbled blessings innumerable, while with trembling fingers he filled the glass to its very brim. Clutching at the small vessel as if half afraid of its reality, he threw back his head and tossed down the whole turning contents without so much as a single asp.

"*They're puttin' her—on the street,*" he



cried, glaring around upon the pinochle players.

"What's up."

"His wife is sick abed and the men are crying her out now, so he says," announced Tim calmly.

"Say, Henderson, brace up. We've fixed all right for you."

"How long before Sheeny will be back?"

"Not for half an hour yet, anyway."

"Why can't you advance him the rent on Ikey's roll, Tim?"

"Don't hardly like to," replied the barkee slowly.

"Chance of a miss, eh?"

"No, its a cinch with Harry, but"—

"But what?"

"Well, you never can tell."

"It's going to be the woman's death if she goes out on the street."

"I dunno"—began Tim hesitatingly.

"Say, Henderson, bring the deputy here. We'll fix it with him."

"That's right. You can't trust Dopey."

A few minutes later Tim had paid the trifling amount out of Ikey's roll and taken a receipt for it from the agent's clerk. All hands were warmed with the glow of righteousness. Henderson hurried away in tearful contrition to assist in the restoration of his household goods.

"I'm goin' to try and find work," he had declared in parting, as he wrung the hands of each and every individual.

ntlemen of the Boiled Lobster Gang,"  
enced Doc, gracefully wiping away  
er imaginary tear; "we have just partici-  
in a glorious work of philanthropy, cal-  
d to redound to the honor of our"—  
: swing doors flew open and Ikey rushed

urry's gone away on a steamer, one of his  
told me. Your toucher couldn't reach  
cried the Hebrew flinging the undeliv-  
note of appeal at Doc. Then he started  
ds the barkeeper with outstretched hands  
;: "Tim, gimme back my wad."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE INVESTIGATOR AT WORK.

one of those glorious mornings in early  
er, when the average citizen feels that  
ld become illustrious if only the oppor-  
showed itself, an auto-cab came bowling  
116th street, West. Upon approaching  
ighborhood of the elevator tower the ve-  
slackened pace and finally brought up  
nient to the corner curb. With a flush of  
ment mantling his brow Phidias Rowell  
ie jumped out, and having paid the mon-  
n, entered the building. A lift was upon  
oint of ascending, but the obliging guard  
open the iron lattice for the newcomer's  
ice. *In a few minutes the investigator*  
*upon the downtown elevated station plat-*

form. It was sprinkled over with the usual mixed crowd of waiting passengers.

"Let me see," muttered Smythe to himself as he purchased a newspaper from the whistling boy; "I got out of the left side of the cab there were seven passengers including myself in the elevator; and this newsboy is to my left hand at the present moment. Very good. Very good, indeed."

Scarcely had he thus concluded his odd soliloquy when the huge iron structure commenced to vibrate, and with a splutter of escaping steam, grinding of wheels, and creaking of tightening brake-irons, a train came dashing into the station. The waiting passenger streamed aboard by means of the nearest gates; the investigator with the rest. However, finding himself upon the wrong side from where he wanted to be, he crowded behind the guard (who stood bell-rope in hand with one foot upon either platform,) and entered the other car. Smythe seated himself upon the right hand side and unfolding the newspaper which he had purchased, apparently became absorbed in its contents. After a few moments he peered sidewise towards the door of exit, without putting down the paper.

"Splendid!" he ejaculated to himself. "Nothing could be better. I am now occupying the seventh seat from the door, upon the right side. The seventh seat upon the left side in accordance with the number of people in the elevator at 116th street and the position

of the newsboy who sold me this paper, must be directly across the aisle."

Cautiously lowering the news-sheet a trifle, Phidias darted a quick glance at the point in question. The seventh seat upon the left hand side was, at the moment, unoccupied.

At the very next stop, a pretty mulatto girl was about to take the seat, but paused, wavered, and finally strode further along. There were other false alarms. As station succeeded station the car filled up, but by some odd chance the seventh seat upon the left hand side, remained vacant. Smythe commenced to feel indignant. At length came 23rd, 18th, and 14th streets, and the car rapidly emptied. It was in the shopping hours and the majority of feminine passengers left the train at some one of these three points.

"Franklin street train, only. Franklin street, last stop," called the guard, as they commenced to move away from the station at Bleeker street.

Smythe chewed his moustache viciously.

Just at this moment a man came down the centre of the car and paused directly in front of the investigator. The latter watched him closely. Peering out from the windows and probably reasoning that there was still a minute or so to the end of the journey, the stranger was about to occupy the sixth seat from the door when a dazzling ray of sunlight caused him to slightly amend his *the purpose*. He finally took the sev-

enth seat from the door, the one directly opposite Smythe. The latter heaved a sigh of relief and commenced to furtively study the new comer.

"Preliminary classification," muttered the investigator to himself; "sober-hued tweed suit, turn-down collar, black string tie—has positive convictions: tan shoes and black derby—practical minded. Four sharpened pencils protruding from upper vest pocket. Rather odd that. One or two, quite general; even three, but no means uncommon. But four? However all this is immaterial. Under the circumstances it will be best for me to wait until I am in possession of more complete information before attempting to absolutely classify him by my set method."

Arrived at Franklin street station Smyth followed on after the individual who had recently occupied the seventh seat on the left hand side of the car. Scarcely had they descended the stairway before the latter encountered an acquaintance. The two men entered an adjacent cafe. Smythe did the same thing and managed so well as to secure a seat at the very elbows of the unsuspecting pair. The latter drank and talked; the former drank and appeared to be engrossed in his newspaper. Of course, this was only acting upon the part of Phidias. In reality, he was attentively listening to the puerile conversation of the two. They asked one another concerning the health of their mutual families (although these No

Yorkers, by their talk, were boon companions of many years standing, their wives had probably never exchanged visits) and politely expressed joy upon being assured that all was not so bad as it might be. One related a funny story that had appeared in public print some weeks previous, and the other retorted with a similarly humorous narrative which was entirely new and original.

"Say, Bob," at length remarked the man in whom Smythe was specially interested; "I think I can put you on to something. Don't your people carry a line of structural iron work?"

"Sure," assented the other; "that is more especially the smaller fittings, such as braces and bolts."

"Well, just listen. There's a big demand for this sort of stuff right now. I sold a nice bill of it the other day."

"Do you handle structural iron work?"

"I handle anything out of which I can get a fair return."

"Don't blame you, the way things are going nowadays."

"Take my advice and see Johnson & Trubner. You know them. Down on Pearl street. I was told for a fact that they've got a big order to"—

Phidias hastily rose from his seat, paid for what he had had, and walked out.

"It's enough to make a fellow swear," he *said to himself* as he turned towards Broad-

way. "Johnson & Trubner have my order—at least Ludovic Zam's—for all that structural iron work. Ludovic Zam! That's it. All clues seem to lead to Ludovic Zam, nowad: I must try still another cast, for after having accepted a million dollar fee from him then thrown it away, I don't want to force myself into his mysterious operations."

Two days later, Phidias dressed in fashionable attire, entered his little curiosity-shop office. After carefully locking the door he proceeded to disguise himself. A most artistic wig, unpretentious looking clothes, new wear and shoes, made a wonderful change in his appearance. This was still further heightened by some deft touches with cosmetic moustache and eye-brows, as well as the use of a lightly tinted complexion wash. From one drawer of his desk he selected a veritable magazine of small objects, including a tape measure, bicycle wrench, pocket screw-driver, ball of cord, chalk, box of safety matches and many other articles, and distributed them about among his pockets. Emerging from his apartment, he descended two flights by means of the rarely used stairs, and then stepped aboard one of the several elevators which served the busy building, and went down to the street level. He thus avoided any chance of recognition or suspicion. He next proceeded uptown by regular conveyance and due course found himself in the central

ion of the shopping district. Taking position at the corner of an avenue and a cross-street, the investigator glanced furtively at his watch and waited some moments expectantly. A stream of people coming and going in either direction, eddied around and jostled his elbows continuously. Ever since looking at his watch, Phidias had been muttering to himself, at the same time gazing steadily in front. A close observer would have noted a slight shaking of his head at more or less regular intervals. This usually betrays the tally-keeper. As a matter of fact, the investigator was counting the persons that passed within arm's reach of him. It was busy work, at such a spot and hour.

"Ninety-one, two, three, four, five, six," he quickly reached.

Then came a momentary lull until a joyous, excited young girl, neatly but plainly attired, rode along.

"Seven," continued Phidias.

With a well-nigh sickening odor of patouli, a richly dressed, beautiful, but hardened woman of the town, swept haughtily past.

"Eight," counted the investigator, while his pulse lit up with the excitement of the chase.

Two common enough looking individuals were approaching. The one who would pass close to Phidias was a meek-appearing man of middle age, cheaply clothed, and with all those small indications of personal negligence which point so unmistakably to the toiling



classes. He was conversing with his companion and seemed to be combating some weak argument of the latter.

"Mark my words," he was saying, as the pair drew abreast of the investigator, whose lips silently indicated the numeral "ninety nine;" "the trade-mark is a sham."

"There you go again, Carlos," retorted the other jeeringly. "Anyone would"——

But the pair had passed out of easy ear-shot and the rest of the sentence was lost in the noise of traffic.

"That's my man," thought Smythe to himself. "Now to trace along the clue."

Following close after the twain to prevent losing sight of them, as was necessary in such a concourse of people, the investigator at length found himself in front of a door in a side street which had lettered upon it the words "FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY." Through this portal the individual whom Phidias had counted as ninety-nine, accompanied by his conversing comrade, passed and disappeared from view. In nowise discouraged Smythe turned on his heel and in a few seconds went into the same establishment by means of the public entrance. It was one of those huge department stores; in other words, a host of varied stocks under one roof; a general bazaar in which the elaborate booths are but blocks in the mighty archway of trade, of which the controlling master-mind forms the keystone; the latest evolution in retail merchandizing, which

als even while it fascinates the student of  
ial science.

Directly in front of the investigator as he  
ered, was a huge bank of clothespins—com-  
n, ordinary, wooden clothespins; the same  
quality, apparently, as those to be found in  
r appropriate small shop. But, in the pres-  
case, the quantity was awe-inspiring. This  
oden rampart was being besieged by an  
y of shoppers. Their serried ranks com-  
sed it about on every hand. The garrison-  
body of salesgirls fought unceasingly with  
ir pencils and slips of paper. Over their  
ds swung the battle-flag—an elaborately  
red cardboard sign, reading:—

AS ADVERTISED. VERY SPECIAL TO-DAY, 500 FOR 39 CENTS. ONLY ONE LOT TO A CUSTOMER.
--

n their eagerness to be first in the fray  
ie of the invaders made mistakes. In rush-  
for what seemed to be a breach they fre-  
ntly left a prime spot unoccupied. Phidias  
s so fortunate as to sidle into such an  
oted position, where he was able to pick  
some of the clothespins and examine them.  
What was that ingenious theory I read  
other day?" he thought to himself, unmind-  
of the din about him. "How did it go? Ah,

yes. "Cheap goods means cheap labor, which, in turn, means insufficient wages to warrant matrimony. Therefore, the word bargains is only another name for infanticide." Upon the other hand, it seems odd that anybody should feel impelled to pay more for clothespins than their less conscientious neighbors."

"Shall I book your order, sir?" chirped a bright-eyed Jewess, defiantly turning from a score of clamoring customers, with the expectation of waiting upon a member of the rarer shopping sex.

"Er—No, I think not," stuttered the investigator, blushing nervously through his complexion wash and abruptly forcing himself out from among the mob of chattering and indignant feminine shoppers.

It was some little time before he had completely recovered his equanimity and started in earnest to hunt up the meek-looking individual whom he had every reason to believe to be an employee of the concern. He had scarcely realized the magnitude of his appointed task, at first. Through one department after another he sauntered; keenly eyed by the floor-walkers and head men, not speak of the innocent-appearing store detectives of either sex. Phidias looked more particularly at the faces of the army of salesmen. He took no special heed of the aisles of goods bearing counters, the great areas of floor space filled with all the numberless varieties of modern merchandizing specialties, the pu

throngs of people, the many luxurious adornments and fittings for the pleasure or comfort of clients, and all the rest of the details which go to make the department store the really wonderful institution that it is at the present time. Fortune favored the investigator. He had casually examined two whole floors and was preparing to ascend to the next in a passenger elevator, when in a small section of the grocery department he espied the individual of whom he was in search.

"How much is your comb honey?" queried Phidias, as he came up to the little counter presided over by his quarry.

"Extra special at nine cents, to-day," replied the salesman in a sing-song manner, "but this lot," indicating another array of packages, "is very much finer at seventeen cents, and really worth more than the difference in both quality and quantity."

"I hope there is no sham about this nine cent stuff," coolly remarked Smythe, picking up one of the small glass-covered boxes and giving a quizzical smile in the direction of the employee.

"Sham!" ejaculated the salesman, glancing quickly around so as to see if anyone else was within hearing distance. "Well now, what do you expect for the price? Of course its sham. Artificial comb filled with honey-flavored syrup. Nothing else. Bees could not work for such wages."

"Just about what I thought," put in the in-

investigator calmly, at the same time looking directly at the other's hands.

"But then, everything in the world is more or less of a sham," continued the salesman weakly, "so there is no particular originality about this item."

"You interest me," remarked Phidias.

"Why?"

"Because you are the victim of a theory."

"Victim? How do you make that out?"

"You imagine that you have discovered a new axiom of life."

"Maybe I have."

"Let us argue the point."

"I—I am here for purely business purpose. Pardon me, but I must attend strictly to my sales."

"Can you not spare a few moments?"

"I—I—You will have me punished if we continue talking much longer."

"What do you mean?"

"If we salespeople are detected wasting too much time we are fined."

"What would happen if you asked permission to go out and take a walk with me?"

"A walk? Ask to go out for a walk? I like to catch myself doing it. I'd get the blue envelope in a hurry."

"Discharged?"

"Yes, discharged. But please don't bother me any longer. Here's a floor-walker coming this way now. He's got his eye on me."

"Are you not a free man in a free country?"

Only slaves and serfs quake before the glance of an overseer, like you appear to do."

"That freedom is another sham; one of the biggest. This floor-walker is just as much afraid of the department managers as I am of the floor walkers. And so it goes along the whole line. Possibly the bosses may be an exception, but I doubt it. If not of other men or women, they are liable to be under the thumb of their wives. Freedom! Bosh! Mere sham."

"I am more than ever interested by what you say. Would a ten dollar bill—a real one, no sham—be an inducement?"

"Now you're talking sense."

"Yes, cents, ten hundred of them. I'll cheerfully invest that amount, if you'll give me an hour or two of your time this afternoon."

"No bluffing?"

"Here's five to bind the bargain. I'll produce the other when you've delivered the goods."

"All right."

"But tell me, how are you going to manage to get away without losing your position?"

"What is the principle of homeopathy?"

"Curing like with like."

"Exactly. That's a good rule in lots of other things besides medicine."

"I perceive that you aspire to be a philosopher."

"Thanks. I hadn't thought of it in that way before."

"But you are not answering my original question, and"——

"Why, it's merely another case of shamming. I'm going to pretend to feel sick, or make some such lying excuse, and so beg off."

"Oh, I see."

"They'll deduct my whole day's wages from this week's pay, but with your ten dollars I'll be lots ahead of the game."

"And you imagine that you will have no difficulty in obtaining permission to leave?"

"I think not, for the reason that this will be the first time that I've begged off since I came here, and that's more than three months ago. If a man's wife or mother was dying and he happened to have obtained leave of absence a few times just before, he'd find that it might mean his discharge to be at the death-bed. But, on the other hand, a fellow can sham sickness or make some such trivial excuse once or twice and manage it easily. However, if you don't meet me outside within twenty minutes, come back here and I'll return the five dollar bill. I don't want your money for nothing."

A floor-walker came sauntering up at this moment. The salesman looked scared.

"I'll have one of those seventeen cent combs," remarked Phidias in business-like accents.

The salesman smiled his gratitude as he took *the money* from the investigator's outstretched *hand*, and proceeded to write the cash slip.

The floor-walker continued onward without a word.

After receiving his parcel and change, Smythe made his way back to the appointed place of meeting, and sauntered up and down in front of the store. He was soon joined by the salesman. The latter giggled, as he said:

"Made believe that I wanted to show a rich relation around the city. Took splendid. Funny how just the name of having rich relations helps a fellow. Shouldn't wonder if I'd get my salary raised soon, on account of it. An honest chap, who don't sham occasionally, is apt to get cut lower."

"Now, Carlos,"—commenced the investigator, as they started to walk downtown.

"How do you know my name?" queried the other in amazement.

"I know a good deal more about Carlos than he imagines," put in Smythe leisurely.

"Another case of sham," retorted the salesman moodily. "You're probably playing some part or other. You don't seem to match your get-up just right."

"How?"

"Well, you look like one of my own kind, while you talk and act on the order of the nobs."

"Are you a competent judge?"

"Don't plenty of the aristocrats come to our store? Trust them. It takes the rich to find where to get their things the cheapest, *when all is said and done.*"



"I may or I may not be just what I appear," began Smythe slowly; "but don't you think this habit you have of looking upon everything and anything as a mere sham, comes from being somewhat of a pretender yourself? Perhaps like sometimes cures like, but it is also apt to produce the same, under normal conditions.

"Me? A pretender?"

"Yes. Instead of working at your proper trade, I find you in the grocery department of a big store."

"How do you know that I have any trade?"

"Can you deny that you are or were a watchmaker, or more particularly a watch repairer?"

The salesman stopped short and looked at his companion with every symptom of alarm.

"How came you to know this?" he gasped at length. "I thought all that old life was buried and gone with the past."

"Our lives can never be really buried until our bodies have been," replied the investigator soberly. "The grave is the only place that can keep a secret, and even it is not invariably successful."

"Will you say just what you want with me?" questioned the salesman uneasily. "While I have never intentionally committed any punishable crime, I have come to realize by bitter experience the uneven course of so-called law and justice. Am I to be put under arrest?"

"What! Knowing yourself innocent of any *wrongdoing*, has it actually entered your head

that perhaps I am an officer sent to secure your person without making any disturbance?"

"It certainly has. Upon what other grounds can I understand this interest which you appear to take in me?"

"Ease your mind at once on this point. I am no police official. I am a private citizen."

"How long have you known about me?"

"I saw and knew of you for the first time in my life something less than a couple of hours ago."

"Where?"

"You were on the avenue with a companion, probably returning from lunch."

"Yes, I was."

"Next, I accosted you at your counter in the store. Now we have met again."

"Somebody must have told you my name and old trade; but whom it could have been I do not know, for"——

"You are mistaken. It is all very simple. Let me continue. You are a native of Long Island, and, I imagine, although in this I may be wrong, born and brought up in the Hamptons?"

"Yes. I come from Water Mills."

"You were in prosperous circumstances up to a few years ago. Your married life was all that could be desired at first, but ended unhappily?"

"True! Every word of it," cried Carlos wonderingly. "How do you know all this?"

*"Relate to me briefly why you have chosen*

to be an employee in a department store, and I will enlighten you regarding the sources of my own information. But I warn you now, my disclosure will seem very simple and trifling," said Smythe.

All this time they were walking downtown at a good pace and continued doing so while the salesman narrated the following experiences:

"As you have said," he began; "I was born at the other end of Long Island. I came to New York a young man, with the usual idea of making my fortune. After various trials and tribulations, which I need not bother you with, I was apprenticed to a working jeweler, and learned the trade of a watch-repairer in all its branches. In due course, by dint of saving wages and keeping eyes open for an opportunity, I started business in a small way upon my own account and gradually built up a connection which seemed destined to increase and prosper as the years rolled along. About this time I married a young woman who seemed eminently desirable. We were very happy in the first year of our wedded life and even more so later on when a baby girl came to join in our family chorus." Tears commenced to roll down the salesman's face and he snuffled aloud. But after a few seconds of silence a frown spread over his brow and he continued in much harsher accents than he had yet used. "*Things* were at their very flood, business *growing*, home happy, and health of the best

when a by no means uncommon street incident with which I had purely accidental concern, changed the tide of affairs completely. Returning homeward late one night from business, I happened to be a witness of an assault committed by one man upon another. Without mentioning names, both parties being well-known society people and wielding sufficient influence to drive me out of the country if they cared to do so, I will say that it was a case of drunken bullying. The smaller man, however, was the assailant. He attacked the bigger fellow and gave the latter a tremendous trouncing. Not desiring to be mixed up in the thing I made off as soon as I saw a policeman approaching, and endeavored to dismiss the matter from my mind. Judge of my astonishment, when some months later I read in the newspapers that the small man was suing the person he had really attacked for heavy damages; alleging himself to be the one assaulted. His description of what had happened, in its garbled form, together with time and place, brought the whole affair freshly back to my memory. I hesitated a long time before offering myself as a witness to the sued party, but reasoning that duty as a citizen demanded it, I yielded to the dictates of conscience and communicated with the defendant's lawyer. You can probably imagine at least a portion of what followed. At the trial the plaintiff's attorney *cross-questioned* and badgered me in every

manner possible, insinuating by his cleverly put questions that there was no doubt of my being an escaped convict, a person of most vicious habits, and a dangerous character from my early youth. Moreover, he boldly declared, and produced a number of lying witnesses to prove, that I was a perjurer and in the pay of the defendant. I stood it all as well as I was able, until by means of a most dastardly innuendo the skilful practitioner seemingly brought my wife's purity into question. Mad-dened beyond all bounds of reasoning by this new diversion of the pettifogger, in which, moreover, he seemed to be upheld by the very silence of the court officers and jurymen, I became frantic and threatened, cursed, and raved, in a manner scarcely calculated to impress my hearers favorably. One of these thoughtless remarks of mine was immediately caught up and turned and twisted to suit the purposes of the unscrupulous attorney. He succeeded in convincing the Judge that I contemplated fleeing from the jurisdiction of the court. I was accordingly sent to the House of Detention and treated much more like a felon awaiting trial, than a voluntary witness to prevent wrong being done an innocent man. In common justice to the one whose cause I had been upholding (of course he was out on bail and free to come and go) I must say that he sent his lawyer to see that I was made as comfortable as was possible. But even this *had an ill effect upon my fortunes.* A know-

ledge of it being brought to the notice of the court by the other's attorney and suitably embellished, caused me to be regarded with more suspicion than at first. To make a long story short, I was kept a prisoner for over five weeks, while the case was being dragged along and postponed, according to the accepted system which maintains. When I had been at length exonerated and received a meaningless apology from the court, I was really out of my mind. The impossible had happened. Whether impelled to belief of my own degeneracy by the sensational newspaper accounts or herself possessing a hitherto unsuspected taint of viciousness, I do not know; but, at any rate, in my absence, the wife whom I so loved and trusted had yielded to the addresses of a seducer and gone off with him, after realizing as much ready cash as possible from the sale of my business and our household effects. This she was easily able to do by reason of my having put everything in her name so as to avoid the rapacious delays of the law in the event of my death. Moreover, our child, my little Elsie"—

The poor fellow leaned against a lamp-post and commenced to loudly sob and cry. Anxious to preserve the grief-stricken man from the importunity of the curious, as well as to give him a chance to recover at his ease, Smythe called a hansom which happened to be passing, and assisted the weeping Carlos into *the vehicle*. Following after him, the investi-

gator requested the driver to continue downtown by the least frequented streets.

It was not for some little while that the salesman was able to control himself, but at length he calmed down and in spite of the suggestion of Phidias that he leave the rest untold, continued his narrative, as follows: "The inhuman mother, whom, as I never at any time before detected in the slightest perfidy, may possibly have been hypnotized by the strong will of another, had deserted her only child. The little girl was found in a half-starved condition, and with due formalities put under the care of a charitable organization. Judge of my anger when I found that I could not regain possession of my own flesh and blood. That the dastardly and totally unproved aspersions upon my character, combined with the destitute condition in which I now found myself, prejudiced the authorities against at once restoring that only remaining comforter to my longing arms. They kept the child but allowed me to see her once a week, and, in time, it was understood that I should have possession of her again. As I have said, I was out of my proper mind by reason of mental anguish, but, nevertheless, I was a good workman and quickly secured a position. I toiled without regard to time or wages, and lived as I best could, always counting the hours between the eventful days upon which I was permitted to visit my little daughter. One bright and lovely morning I entered

the big roomy vestibule of the fine building in which she was lodged. A new incumbent, or at least one that I had never met before, sat at the office desk. 'Who do you want to see?' he asked gruffly. I meekly repeated her name. He ran his fingers up and down the index of the big volume in front of him, opened it to a certain page, and said, 'She's dead, convulsions, last week!' At the time I only heard his first two words. I fell to the floor unconscious. The deskman, who declared that he had taken it for granted that I was merely the agent of a society having to do with children and not a parent, assisted the nurses in reviving me, and apologized for his harshness most profusely. But the blow well nigh finished my career. I really wish that it had."

As the salesman came to an abrupt halt in his narration, Phidias presumed that it was practically finished, and, thinking to change the sad current of the speaker's thoughts, started in upon a sort of miniature lecture.

"In order to redeem my promise concerning how I happen to know several things about you, without any previous acquaintance or hearsay gossip," commenced the investigator in matter-of-fact tones, "it will be best to take the several small items which seemed to so astound you and give my keys in their regular order. First, as to the name of Carlos: I heard your companion upon the avenue, on the very first occasion of my seeing you, address *you by this familiar title*. Could anything be *more simple?*"



"But how about my being a watch repairer by trade?" queried the salesman, gradually regaining his composure.

"Even more simple, if such a thing could be possible," went on Smythe in livelier accents. "Very nearly all of the manual trades produce marks or scars upon the workers which serve to designate their specialty to a discerning eye. For a single instance, joiners and cabinet makers are readily distinguishable by a prominent calloused spot on the back of the right hand, at the juncture of the first and second phalanges of the forefinger. This comes from the use of the jointing plane. In your trade, that of a watch-repairer, the thumb-nail of the right hand becomes very thick, lamelated and scaly, from constantly opening cases. The thumb and forefinger of the left hand, being used to hold the small works of the dissected watch or clock while it is being manipulated, suffer from the constant friction of the file, saw and hammer. In spite of your discontinuance of the trade for some time these distinguishing marks are plainly visible, and by them and them only, I determined your prime calling. Accent told me that you were a native Long Islander, and a chance colloquialism, gave me an inkling of the exact locality. The rest of my surmise, for it was only of that quality, is the result of long practice in facial and character study."

"It sounds easy enough the way you tell it," commented Carlos rather dubiously, "but"—

"Where are we?" interrupted the investigator, leaning forward to have an unobstructed view from the hansom. "Well! Printing House Square already. I had no idea of coming so far. What say you to getting out and stretching our legs for a while?"

"Just as you wish."

Phidias accordingly stopped the vehicle and they both alighted. No sooner had they done so than the investigator noticed that the salesman glanced around with a most cynical expression and commenced muttering to himself.

"I beg your pardon?" said Smythe.

"What?" returned the other in wonder.

"I did not quite catch your last few words," replied Phidias innocently.

Carlos squirmed uneasily but offered no explanation.

"What were you saying?" went on the investigator.

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing much."

"Well, what?" continued Smythe persistently.

"Only——only that everything is a sham."

Curious to know the cause of this sudden return to the pet theory and following out his system of exhaustive investigation, Phidias laughingly remarked: "Come now. You must really be more explicit. Point out some of this universal shammy for me?"

"Where shall I begin?"

"Is it really so abundant?"

"It is everywhere."

"Begin at what you please."

"Do you see that resplendently attired lad who is just going across the street?"

"Yes."

"She is an example of the literary sham."

"How?"

"She is a remarkably clever woman and writes articles upon all manner of abstruse topics, as well as novels, stories, and verses, which she allows vain people, actors, millionaires, society ladies, and others, to append the names as authors, for a handsome monetary consideration. Is that not shammy?"

"It certainly has the appearance of being so."

"You are reserved in your admissions. Look here is an example from the other sex. See that man?"

"Yes."

"He has a system of allowing others to get the benefit of his own name, or rather, to let it be strictly correct, a name of which he is the proprietor. He is well fixed in this world's goods, lives on the best of the land and has sons in responsible positions and daughters married to leading young men. Do you know in what his means of money-getting consists?"

"I do not, although I have seen this individual in various public places and happen to know his name."

"That man publishes a paper; a financial *trade paper*, to be more explicit. At one time

it was a leader of its kind and carried weight with many readers. Even yet its prestige, particularly among thousands of people living away from New York, is very high. In spite of the honesty and rigid adherence to truth with which the original proprietors of this publication slowly built up such splendid credit, or perhaps from that self-same cause, they were forced into bankruptcy at last. This man bought the paper for a mere song and now uses its capital, in other words its reputation, for sand-bagging purposes."

"How? That is rather a sensational statement to"—

"Let us suppose that you have some plausible scheme by which you can win other people's money without any particular risk. There are new ideas of this sort cropping up in New York every hour in the day, not to mention the old ones which continue to thrive and prosper in accordance with the time-honored principle that there is a new fool born every minute. Let us further suppose that your particular plan is a so-called financial one. Most of them are. You have a company, say, which is to give back two dollars and thirty-seven cents for every dollar put in it, or something of that ridiculous kind. You know what I mean. Well, you pay this man some hundred dollars or it may be thousands, the amount probably depending upon how much he thinks you are likely to get out of the thing. In other words, *he demands an advance percentage of your*

stealings. His paper is then at your service for advertisements as well as for extravagantly worded editorial endorsements and eulogistic comments upon the great success of your bogus corporation. The reputation of his paper still carries weight, as I said before. Even the most cautious clients are often gulled by their belief in this reliability."

"Both of these examples you have given me are from the publishing fraternity. Is this particular branch of human activity more shamery than any other?"

"By no means. Only we happen to be, at the moment, where it is more in evidence. Do you see that fine tall structure?"

"Yes."

"That is a case of religious sham."

"How?"

"It was built from funds furnished by mite boxes, church sociables, pious contributions, maybe in many cases not easily spared money, donated for the furtherance of mission work among the heathen. Behold the result. A huge office-building bringing in a yearly rental to"——

"Precisely. It is like the capital of a business. This rental is a regular income available for missionary purposes."

"That is one way of looking at the matter. But I think you will agree that trust funds should be used for exactly the purposes specified by their trusting donators, and not diverted to any preliminary side speculation, no mat-

ter how alluring. Then there is another phase. Some of the tenants in this office building are openly engaged in lines of business not in accordance with the strict tenets of Christianity as expounded by the preachers of the present day. Should the furthest mission-labor house their opponents, even for a rental pittance? Is it logical to pay out money from one pocket to teach things, and take money in at another pocket from those practicing some of the things warned against?"

"I am afraid, Carlos, that you are somewhat morbid in your imagination."

"Look over at the City Hall. Is not that supposed to be the building where the head of New York's local government has his office?"

"Well?"

"This is one variety of civic political sham. What citizen does not know that the duly elected chief of the local administration is practically but the figure-head for a party cabal, resorting to and doing the actual business in less public structures?"

"The great fault with your theory is that you only look at these matters from a single point of view."

"Just a block or two distant from where we now are, over upon the western side of Centre, between Reade and Duane streets, stands a living monument to legislative shammery. It is an old water reservoir, hid from view and housed within what is apparently an ordinary warehouse building. No less a personage than

Aaron Burr was responsible for this interior erection. Unable to secure a charter for a bank he organized a company having the avowed object of supplying New York City with drinking water. In the enabling act passed by the State Legislature, was an obscure paragraph which practically authorized the company to do a banking business with any unemployed capital. You see that modern financiers are not wholly original after all. There is the puny reservoir, according to the letter of the charter. Down on Wall street to-day, is the big banking institution originated and what is more, kept alive in such fashion."

"You seem to have made quite a study of your illustrations for this sham theory?"

"I have. I could point out the visible shams until we were both weary, but even then the subject would merely be skimmed, as one might say. It is my belief that nearly everything is a sham, but some are more easily proven so than others. In many cases the shamery is intermixed and glossed over with such contradictory matters, that it is hard to get at the meat of the thing clearly and logically. Why, I have even come to the conclusion that my benefactor was a sham, although it seems base in me to think so."

"Your benefactor?"

"Yes, I had not quite finished my story when you interrupted. I knew your kind purpose in doing so and appreciated the thoughtfulness of it very highly. But as long as I told you so

much I might as well relate the balance. You must know then, that crazed at the sudden loss of my only child, the knowledge of which was broken to me in such a brutal fashion, I gave up all hope of everything and became a mendicant. I begged for money. With it I tried only to drown my consciousness in strong drink, trusting to perish while in this condition. After one of these 'sprees' as the ignorant anti-liquor people often call them, I awoke to find myself in a clean bed and being cared for most tenderly. I could not understand it at first, but with regaining health and strength I was brought to realize that I had been rescued from my fate by a chance witness of my degradation. This noble man supplied me with funds, offered me even more than I would accept, with which to start the battle of life anew. I could not go back to my old trade. The associations were too painful. I secured a position in the department store in which you found me, where I am trying to do my duty cheerfully and forget the wretched past."

"What makes you imagine that your benefactor is a sham?"

"Nothing really substantial, but his comings and goings were most erratic, and he seemed to be engaged in weighty and important operations of a secret nature. By the bye, he had no hands. Cut off in an accident, so he"—

"Ludovic Zam again!" exclaimed Smythe petulantly.

"Yes, Ludovic Zam. Do you know him?"



"I do."

"Strange. You appear to have changed your manner to me, at mention of his name."

"Pardon, Carlos. I acknowledge a momentary irritation. I am going to make a proposition to you. I own a farm on Shelter Island. At the moment I have no tenant. Are you in love with your present calling?"

"Indeed, I am not."

"Would you like to be a farmer?"

"I was one originally and should be glad indeed of the chance of going back to it."

"Good. I will supply you with a few hundred dollars capital in order to properly stock the place, and you can manage Roseland Farm for me. It is a bargain."

\* \* \*

Upon the following day Phidias Ros Smythe sat alone in his bachelor apartment uptown. He puffed viciously upon a long stemmed pipe.

"I've run against Ludovic Zam upon a clue of late," he muttered. "That handy man is into everything around here, apparently. I must not risk wasting more time in fiascos. Let me think. Ah! Perhaps I will do."

Hastily rising to his feet he selected a pen and commenced scribbling upon the top of a number of visiting cards.

"Will these give sufficient scope?" he mused, as he paused reflectively. "Hamburg, Moscow, Peking, Cairo, Melbourne"

utta, Rio Janiero, and Auckland. Shall I put in one American city? The odds would be seven to one against my getting it. I think, perhaps, I had better run the risk so as not to leave too much of a chance. Er—Boston will do as well as any."

Having written the name of the city he had just mentioned upon a fresh card, Phidias shuffled the eight together and placed them, written sides downward, in a gorgeously inlaid jewel casket.

"Now, let me understand the thing thoroughly," he muttered, as he resumed his easy chair and pipe. "I will at once proceed to the city that is designated, and my first clue shall be—yes, that will do. It will add one more feature of novelty to the whole."

After a few moments of reflection he pressed a convenient electric button and his valet appeared.

"Jones," cried the investigator, without giving the lackey time to open his lips; "name me the first letter of the alphabet that comes into your head?"

"Hex!" grunted the man.

Phidias made a wry face. "Thank you, Jones," he said after a moment. "Now go to that box, standing on my dressing table."

"Yessir," replied the valet advancing towards the jewel casket.

"In it you will see a number of visiting cards. Stir them around with your fingers."  
"Yessir."

"Shut you eyes, put your hand in the box and pick out one—only one, mind you—o those cards, at random. Are you doing exactly as I tell you?"

"Yessir."

"Now read aloud the word written in penci upon the back, not the engraved name upon its face."

"H'I cawn't, sir."

"Don't you know how to read?" queried Phidias indignantly.

"Yes sir, but you told me to shut my heyes sir, hand you 'aven't told me to hopin' then yet, sir;" replied the faithful fellow.

"Er—well open them now, and read the pencilled name."

"'Boston,' sir," read the valet slowly.

"Thank you, Jones," replied the investigator. "Pack my traveling case. I'm going to Boston by the next train."

"Very good, sir," answered the attendant respectfully, and immediately retired about his duties.

"I had rather hoped that it might have been Auckland or Moscow," remarked Smythe disconsolately; "but the finger of chance points Massachusetts-ward and so Boston let it be. Jones' choice of a letter was pretty odd, though. It may be some time before I happen upon a man having the letter 'X' in his name."

About half-past five in the afternoon of the same day, the investigator appeared at one of

the fine hotels in Boston, walked up to the desk and proceeded to register. Laying down the pen after writing he glanced over the opposite page. A bold signature caught his eye. It was "Richard X. Zimmerman."

"Quick work," thought Phidias: "Here's my clue the very first thing."

"Going, sir," remarked the hotel clerk cheerily, addressing somebody who passing.

"Yes. Didn't make a very long stay this time," replied the departing one. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye, pleasant trip, Mr. Zimmerman."

The investigator turned hastily. The outgoing guest was carrying a brand new dress suit case. Upon its end were the clearly stencilled initials, "R. X. Z."

"Don't assign me to a room just yet," said Smythe coolly to the clerk. "I'm not sure whether I shall stop here over night."

"Very good, sir," replied the attendant, raising his eyebrows.

Phidias turned on his heel and managed to reach the sidewalk just as Zimmerman instructed the driver of a herdic to take him to the Old Colony depot. The investigator engaged the next vehicle and followed. At the railway ticket office the unsuspecting traveler, in a loud voice called for transportation to New York by the Fall River line. Phidias took the same. Determined in this instance, not to try and make the stranger's acquaintance for the present, the investigator kept Zimmerman under a sort of secret espionage. This

was comparatively easy while journeying in the train to Fall River, and also on board of the Sound steamer until the hour for retiring arrived. Then Zimmerman went to a stateroom and Phidias had no option but to do the same. However, the latter was up and out with the first peep of daylight, just before the floating palace made her dock at the Empire City.

"I don't see that New York has changed much since I looked at it last," remarked Smythe grimly, as his eyes swept the familiar buildingscape.

He took station near the gangway and frequently referred to his watch, as if waiting for the time to be ripe for an engagement elsewhere. Luckily, Zimmerman himself proved to be an early riser and soon appeared. Phidias followed on unnoticed after him. They walked down West street, crossed over and took ferry to Hoboken, at Barclay street.

"Good," thought the investigator sagely  
"Another State, anyhow."

Arrived on the Jersey side, the pursuer made his way to a dock and passed aboard a nondescript steamship which lay at one margin. Black smoke was pouring from her funnels and white steam from her exhausts, and various preparations denoted that a speedy departure was in contemplation. Waiting for a few moments until the individual he had been shadowing was out of sight, Phidias proceeded boldly up the steeply slanting gangway which led from the wharf to the vessel's main-deck.

"Hold on, young fellow. No admission except on business. That's the orders;" growled a surly looking quartermaster who blocked his further advance.

"Is this the 'British Pearl?'" queried Smythe, who had read the name on the ship's counter.

"Yes, it is," retorted the other suspiciously; "and what you got to say about that?"

"Do you carry passengers?"

"Where d'you want to go?"

"Oh, most anywhere."

"We don't go to that port. Better try another ship."

"Well, you must know that I've been advised by my doctor to take a sea voyage, and I thought"—continued the investigator pleasantly.

"Everybody's got a right to think," interrupted the brusque quartermaster; "but all I know is that I've got orders to allow nobody aboard, except"—and he came to an abrupt halt, swore softly at himself, and pointed suggestively towards the wharf.

At this moment a couple of men clad in dirty blue overalls and with both faces and hands covered with oil and coal dust, came slouching along the deck.

"Where you two bound?" cried the quartermaster. "We're goin' to sea any minute."

"Got to fetch that new oiler," replied one of the men *gruffly*. "Like as not he'll be drunk."

"Aye, aye," said the under-officer. "Cap'n

told me. Better move along lively if you don't want us to get away with your duds."

While the quartermaster was having his last say, Phidias had descended the gangplank and, walking fast, turned into the street and waited there for the approach of the two messengers.

"Where's the French line wharf?" he cried aloud to them as they drew within speaking distance.

They explained this detail at great length for his benefit.

"Much obliged. Take this and drink my health with it," returned Smythe, offering them a half-dollar.

The rough fellows at first declined, but afterwards with much clumsy touching of forelocks, accepted.

"There is a good place," remarked Phidias, indicating a low groggery across the street.

"We'll drink it on our way back from the crimps, sir," replied one. "We've got to"—

"Crimps? Who may that be?" questioned the investigator, simulating wonder.

"It's only a cant word like, sir, for a fellow that keeps a sailor's lodging house and supplies vessels with men when they're in a hurry for them, sir;" laboriously explained the seaman.

"There's any amount of sich in this neighborhood, bein' near the docks as it is, sir. The one we're bound to is Steamship Ned's, just to starboard of that there clothing store;" *pointing* as he spoke to a dirty looking rookery *about half a block down the street.*

Smythe made no further comment.

"So much talking makes a fellow's throat kinder dry, sir," remarked the last speaker with a grin. "Guess we'll drink your health first. What say, Stevie?"

"Aye, aye, that's me," replied the other approvingly.

The two oilers crossed over and entered the saloon.

"I've got anywhere from ten minutes to a whole half hour," ruminated the investigator, as soon as he had seen them safely housed. "Better try and do the thing in one lick. Take too much time to get slops at another place."

He accordingly made his way to the establishment presided over by Steamship Ned and sought private consultation with that worthy.

"Meester, meester, vot is der use? Vot is it you vant?" commenced the most inaptly named Hebrew, speaking in the usual nasal tones of his type. "S-hellup me, you vont find him in dis hou-ze."

"Find him? Find who?" inquired Phidias angrily. "I'm not looking for anybody."

"Ain't you a detecket-ive?"

"No."

"I taut you vos," in a manner which intimated that he was by no means convinced.

Smythe quickly explained what he wanted. Steamship Ned made up his mind that he had to do with an escaping bank cashier, at least, and tried to drive a hard bargain.



"Take my good clothes and this five dollar bill and give me the outfit. You'll get the advance from the agents. You've got to be quick one way or another for those fellows will be here any minute."

"Gif me ten dollars, Meester. I lose money on the oudfit, s'hellup me."

"Good-bye," and Phidias started for the door in disgust.

"Vait, Meester, I'll do eet, I'll do eet."

Of course it was a better bargain than Steamship Ned had made in many a long day. Smythe quickly threw off his finely tailored outside clothing and drew on the rough gear of a longshoreman. He rubbed coaldust and dirt over hands, arms, face and hair. A regulation ditty bag was given him by the sniveling Jew, who wept profusely over every article which he placed in it. When the two oilers from the "British Pearl" arrived at the lodging house they were in no special condition to examine their convoy too closely. Moreover, Phidias was admirably disguised and they had little reason to be inquisitive. The Hebrew from his doorway watched the trio return down street.

"He forgodt to take the money from his trousers pocket," Steamship Ned was thinking to himself. "If he tries to come back for it now, I'll haf him arrested for burglary. s'hellup me." But Smythe did not remember his forgetfulness in this particular until too late.

Arrived on board of the "British Pearl," all hands were found in the bustle of departure. Hawser were being cast off, gang-planks drawn in, and already the big propellor was churning the water into foam.

"The two passengers come aboard, Bill?" asked one of the oilers who had been away from the ship.

"Yep," grunted the questioned fellow in the interval of helping to pull a huge hawser inboard. "You—Heave-ho!—lads—Yo heave!—took your—Heave then!—time."

Smythe bustled about with the rest, simulated their stupidity as much as possible, was cursed at by the mates most impartially, and attracted no special attention. To his great satisfaction the investigator saw the man he had trailed from Boston upon the bridge, attired in blue cloth and addressed as "Captain Zimmerman." When the ship had come abreast of the Statue of Liberty on Bedloe's Island two other individuals came out from the after saloon and strolled up and down the quarterdeck. Smythe actually dropped the corner of the big hatch tarpaulin that he was helping to drag over, at the sight of these newcomers. They were Ludovic Zam and Chauncey Maguire.

"What in the ——— is the matter with you, you ——— skulking ———," roared out the third mate who was directing operations. "Get aholt there lively and keep your holt, or I'll take a capstan bar to your ——— skull, you——."

## CHAPTER XV.

### A BREATHING SPELL.

A group of ladies and gentlemen were engaged in animated conversation. The speakers were native-born Americans. The country around them was American; in fact, they were in one of the original thirteen States. Females and males were attired in the unsuitable fabrics and constraining styles, which fashion changefully decrees for outdoor sports.

"He baffed on a stimme. Used a long spoon to loft a hanger," one sweet-voiced maid was vivaciously stating.

"They were dormie and like as they laid when Henderson managed a gobble—prettiest cleek work I've seen in some time—and poor Bob only rubbed a cup, dead;" declared a masculine in the same breath.

The buzz of such talk was almost incessant. "Easy mashie shot but I missed the globe." "You must really give me bisque." "I should call that a grassed niblick." "Four holes up and three to play." "It was a swipe and made clear of the whins." "The rind of my baffing spoon is loose." "He always wants to tee off first." "Half-one in our foursomes? Nonsense." "Do you favor the bulger brassie niblick?" "I thought they said it was one off three?"

"There is Miss Carnwood now," remarked a jabberer, indicating the direction with a look from his eyes.

“Addressing the ball?” queried a companion.

“Yes.”

“Um!”

“Ah!”

“By Jove! That’s good golf,” declared one of the men, as Mary led off the green.

“Her hair is all loose and she looks a perfect fright, poor girl,” cooed a woman spectator.

In the middle distance was the clubhouse, a nightmare of architecture with many gaudy shades represented in its outside painting. From the broad verandas a bird’s-eye view of the links could be obtained. Couples, attended by bag-laden caddies, were scattered about the course. Here and there, groups of enthusiasts had gathered to exchange views and awe novices into submission. There was a vista of peaceful countryside, marred by blotches of new turf known as “putting greens,” impossible banks of sodded earth denominated “artificial hazards or bunkers,” and little flag whiffs thrusting their tawdry selves into Nature’s hitherto perfect color schemes.

“Mr. Fogarty, who is that gentleman sitting on the veranda with papa? They were laughing and joking together when we came past;” said Mary Carnwood, as the young couple strolled away from the teeing-off place.

“Don’t you know him?” chirped Ulysses in evident astonishment.

"I do not, or I scarcely should have asked for the information;" replied Mary smilingly.

"By Jove! Weally its astonishing. Thought evweybody knew him. Not know J. J. Wodengeld? Idea! Weally!"

"Indeed. Oh, then I know of him. I've heard that Mr. Rodengeld is very wealthy."

"Umph!"

"Is he—has he as much money as papa, do you think?"

"Well—er—wather difficult question to an-sah, Miss Cawnwood."

"Why?"

"Aw—numbah of weasons."

"Name one?"

"Well—er—foah instance: I don't know how much youah fathah is woath."

"Neither do I. Papa himself has said that he does not know exactly. But yet common report must surely name comparative figures for the two."

"Ha-ha! Excuse me, Miss Cawnwood, but by Jove! you know, that 'common weport' stwuck me funny."

"How so?"

"Pawdon my levity, Miss Cawn"—

"Dear me, you're quite tragic. Your mirth is very excusable, provided you tell me the joke so that I can also laugh."

"Well—it may not seem so—er—humowous to you as it did to me. But here's youah ball. I'll tell you about it aftah we dwive."

The caddie, who had discreetly loitered behind, now came up, and for the next ten or fifteen minutes matters of moment were in hand. The small white ball lay upon the sod at their feet. The idea was that it must be hit so as to go clear over a fence and as near as possible to a hole in the ground, marked by a tiny flag. Anybody who did not understand the science of the game would have taken a club and swiped at the ball, trusting to luck and the measuring abilities of their eyes. But Mary was a golfer. She gave her opinion. So did Ulysses St. George Fogarty. The caddie was called upon and offered some suggestions. By this time, Mary had changed her mind.

"I'm going to try it with the ordinary driver," she announced desperately.

"Dwiving cleek would be my choice," said Fogarty sulkily.

"It's always done with a mashie, Miss," opined the caddie.

But the desired club was handed to Mary by the attendant and she took up position and proceeded to get ready for the drive.

About half a mile away a farm wagon was passing along the country road, laden with produce for market. "Gosh all hemlock, 'Lige," said one of the two rustics upon the front seat of the vehicle, pointing out Mary Carnwood to his companion; "I've been awatchin' thet there gal for ten minutes, and I vum if she ain't done nothin' but swing thet

stick of her'n back an' forrard like a clock pendulum. Why, in nation, if she be agoin' to hit the ball, don't she do it and git done? I never see sich giglallyin' as them Yorkers makes over their guff goin's on."

But, at length, when she was perfectly ready, Mary's club swung high and came down true and strong exactly where she wanted it. The white ball soared in the air, over the fence.

"I think you're made," remarked Ulysses, and they moved off towards the spot where his own ball was lying.

"Now, Mr. Fogarty, I'm ready to listen to that funny story of yours," said Mary, as they strolled forward again, a quarter of an hour later.

"Aw—by Jove!—Yes. Oh, I don't know that it would make you laugh. Doesn't seem vehwey funny to me now. Evah have a thing stwike you that way—funny at firwst, and then not so funny, aftahwahd?"

"Very frequently. But tell this to me, just the same."

"Well, you see, when my college chum's fathaw died, the newspapahs all said he was woath fifty millions. Tuarned out that he had less than ten. And when my dad went ovah they said he had left five millions, when it weally pwoved to be nearer twenty. So you see, one cawn't go much on common weport."

"That's so."

"As fah as the common weport twavels. youah fathaw is supposed to be a witcher man than Wodengeld."

"Indeed."

"But, on the othaw hand, Wodengeld is safaw."

"Safer? What do you mean by that?"

"Able to turn awound quickaw and—er—swing his capital—er—It's not easy to explain the thing to you, but I'll give a case in point. I am fixed somewhat similawly to youah fathaw in one way at least; that is, my money is all tied up in investments. Pwofitable ones, paying good dividends wegularly, but, nevahtheless, it takes time to wealize upon the capital, if you happen to get a twifle cwamped. Had to boawow fifty thousand myself the othaw day at a pwetty stiff intwest, to make that fiast payment on my new yacht. Seems funny foah wealthy men to be cwamped foah weady money, but most of us are at times. Now, Wodengeld is celebrated foah always having weady money. In fact, I boawowed the fifty thousand fwom him. They say he can plank down a couple of million in spot cash on demand, if necessary. Has a wegular safe deposit vault undah his town house."

"I'm glad he is not richer than papa, as long as papa is rich; for I think this man Rodengeld is the most rascally looking individual I've ever seen."

"He is no pwize beauty, that's suah. But you don't imagine that he has any pawticulaw



enmity against youah fathaw, Miss Cawnwood, do you?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Well—er—nothing."

"Nothing! Tell me what you mean?"

"Oh, only this. You seem to talk as if—er—Wodengeld was likely to—er"—

"Go on."

"As if he might twy to get some of youah fathaw's money away fwom him?"

"I must confess that I had such an idea in mind. It was merely supposition."

"But when I pwopos—er—You told me one time that you hated money?"

"No, not exactly that. I said I did not like the thought of being wealthy when there was so much poverty and wretchedness in the world."

"Well then, why should you wepine if youah fathaw did happen to lose some of his wealth to old Wodengeld? Not that such a thing is at all likely. But if it did happen, why should you wepine?"

"I wouldn't so far as I am personally concerned. In fact, I should be glad of it. But for my father's sake I must try to think otherwise. He has become so attached to wealth and wealth-making, that even a trivial loss would grieve him sorely. And as a loving daughter, I do not wish to see him worried."

"You know, Miss Cawnwood, you'ah an angel, you know. Isn't theah any chance of

youah weconsidering my offah of mawiage?  
Would you"——

"Please, Mr. Fogarty. Remember that was to be a tabooed subject. We were to be good friends, you remember, but nothing more was to be said about"——

"Yes, yes. Pawdon. Er—Caddie! Caddie! Come here? I'll take a—er—yes, a bulger niblick. How are we now?"

"Like as we lie."

"Then heah's foah a wub on the gween."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh, dear darling sweetness, I've found you at last," chirped Eunice Von Ruytman as Mary Carnwood appeared upon the clubhouse veranda, her cheeks all aglow from the recent exercise. "Come up to the boudoir. I've got the greatest piece of news to tell."

"News?" echoed Mary, with but a languid show of interest, as they ascended the staircase with their arms entwined.

"Yes, I feel sure you will never guess. It's a great secret. Who do you think it concerns?"

"I have not the faintest idea."

"Now just try to think. Somebody that you know very well."

"Mr. Dibbs. He and you are to be married and I am selected as your bri"——

"No, no; not yet. Although you promised me, you know. This is about another young gentleman, who, by the bye, has long been attentive in a certain direction."

"Mr. Smythe?"

"Why yes. Did you hear about it?"

"About what?"

"Oh, darling, you look frightened. I really believe you care for him. No. Tired from playing? Well then, listen. He has disappeared in the most mysterious fashion, and"—

"Disappeared?"

"Yes. Gone. Vanished without leaving cards, you know. Awfully bad taste. Nobody knows any special reasons for such actions on his part. They say"—

"When did he—disappear?"

"That is also a mystery. Isn't the whole thing like one of those delightful romances of thingumbob's? His valet declares that Mr. Smythe started for Boston about a week ago. Since that time nobody has seen or heard of him."

"But surely the authorities are searching. He may have been robbed or waylaid. Perhaps is now lying in high fever in some out-of-the-way hospital, under the uncertain charge of strange nurses."

"My! How you go on. No, the authorities have nothing to do with it. As soon as they found that Mr. Smythe was not an embezzler or a fugitive from justice, they simply dropped the matter."

"Then honest men can be made away with and no particular investigation follows; while a hiding criminal is chased all over the world regardless of expense. Is that the idea?"

"Well, I do declare, darling, you look just splendid. Your eyes are snapping fire. You remind me of Bernhardt, or maybe it was Duse, I forget which, in that scene of what's the name, where"——

"It is terrible to think of him in"——

"But perhaps Mr. Smythe wanted to disappear. He may have had some great sorrow and—Goodness gracious! There, darling. Wait till I lock the door. Somebody's coming along the hall. I'm sure that"——

A timid knock was heard upon the outside, followed by the voice of a maid-servant sent to announce that Mr. Carnwood was waiting for his daughter.

"Please tell papa that I will be down in a minute," answered Mary, in trembling tones.

"Let me bathe your eyes, dear. You are shaking like a leaf," went on Eunice, fluttering about her comrade in a helpless sort of a way. "I wouldn't attempt to go downstairs for a little while. People will be apt to notice that you've been crying. I'm sure that I never even suspected your"——

"Suspected my what?" demanded Mary, gradually becoming more composed.

"Th—th—th—that you cared a pin for Phidias Smythe, dear."

"And who said I did?"

"D—d—don't look so wild at me, darling. I didn't mean anything. If I'd thought the news of his disappearance would have affected you so, I'd never have been the one to speak

of it. I'm so sorry. I seem to always be doing the wrong thing, just when I try so hard to"——

But Mary was paying no particular attention to the protestations of the other, and dabbing softly at her eyes with a handkerchief, unlocked the door and swept out of the room.

J. J. Rodengeld was standing at the carriage-side, talking with her father, as she approached. Both of the elderly gentlemen seemed to be mightily amused over something.

"And this is your fair daughter and heiress, sir," the ready-money millionaire observed with a bold glance at her and not waiting for any form of introduction. "Better think over my offer again. She should not suffer for our amusement."

Mr. Carnwood merely shook his head in the negative and laughed aloud once more. Mary positively flinched from the other as he assisted her to the vehicle. As they drew away Rodengeld stood with head uncovered, gazing at her with a wicked leer. Mary kept her eyes downcast, while a flush of mingled shame and anger mantled her cheeks. Her father was unobservant.

Mary regained her composure very soon, and asked him: "What is this offer which Mr.—— Rodengeld said you had better reconsider, rather than that I should suffer?"

"Nonsense! Mere idle speech upon his part," put in her parent scornfully. "He talks

just such gibberish most of the time. He has queer ideas of humor. We were joking together about always sticking to what we said. He pledged me in a glass of wine and declared that it was his intention to ruin me unless I accepted the offer. Fellow amuses me. I quite enjoyed"——

"But he seemed to me to be in real earnest."

"I guess not. Just his way. Doesn't make any difference if he is."

"But what was the offer?"

"Why, I almost forget. Let me see. Oh, yes, I own a plot of land downtown in New York and it happens to adjoin some of his property, and he said he must have it. That's all."

"Did he offer you a fair price?"

"Well——fair enough. But I don't want to sell. Not at the moment."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### NOT MUCH OF ANY ONE THING.

It took some while for Phidias Rowell Smythe to completely recover his equanimity, after becoming aware that Ludovic Zam and Chauncey Maguire were the two passengers voyaging upon the "British Pearl." But for the hour or so following upon this discovery, the hard work required of the investigator in his position as one of the crew of the steamer,

making all snug abovedecks for the voyage, left scant opportunity for reflection.

"I haven't time to think the thing over and mature a proper plan," he reasoned with himself, "and so, as the diplomats say, I'll continue the status quo for the present."

Smythe was muscular and able to pull and haul with the rest of the crew. The only thing he had to continually guard against was the quick discernment which education gives. To appear to be smarter than the rest of the men would have drawn special attention to him, with all the possibilities of premature discovery by the two passengers. And so he practiced an average degree of stupidity, in close imitation of his messmates, and succeeded admirably in receiving a due share of curses and threats from the under-officers. In his suit of overalls and dirt-begrimed face, he slouched directly in front of Zam and Maguire without calling a second glance or thought from them. By the time the ship was clear of Sandy Hook the new sailor had shaken snugly and unsuspectingly into the ship's company.

"Where we bound?" he asked a brawny deckhand, in uncouth a voice as possible.

"Dunno," replied the one addressed, furtively squirting a great stream of tobacco juice behind a steam-winch. "Ask Liverpool Bill there, he kin tell yer."

"What might be a handle to call you to dinner with?" put in the seaman, whom the other

had indicated with a nod of his head, addressing Smythe.

"My name is Ebenezer"—began Phidias.

"Rats! That ain't no kind of a name for a bully steamboater."

"Ben'll do for short."

"Ben it is then, matey. My eye but you're slick on an answer. What you doin'? Runnin' away from a wife and three children? Shucks! Ain't nothin' if you are. I did. And you'll find more worse than better on most tramps nowadays."

"Is this what they call a tramp steamer?"

"Sure's you born. What'd you think she be? A liner?"

"Where are we bound?"

"That's allus the way with a greenhand. Arter you've knocked about a little you won't care where we're headin' so long as there's grub enough aboard. I heard say as we was goin' to some port down Mexico way, but you can't gamble on a tramp reachin' anywhere special nowadays. He-he! Sometimes cap'n's has orders to change their minds when they's a few days out."

"But h'ain't a ship got to show up at the port she clears for through the Custom House?" put in the supposed Ben argumentatively. "I've heard talk about that kind of thing by an old sailor, oncet."

"You're a regular sea-lawyer, you are," cried Liverpool Bill, sniffing airily. "You want to know everything and the price of it, all to a



time. But you've asked me fair and I'll give you a pinter or so. If a ship is in distress—short o' coal, short o' grub, short o' water, one or all three; can't she put in anywhere for supplies? Or 'spose they want to land cargo, won't a tap with a hammer on an engyne bolt or a punch through a bottom-plate givin' a leak just big enough to keep the pumps goin' nicely; won't either o' them reasons help the cap'n to carry out the 'structions of his agents?"

"You're a cute chap, you are, Bill," remarked one of the other men admiringly.

"Then, like as not, we mayn't even see Mexico this trip?" remarked Smythe innocently.

"Bless yer for a bloomin' chump," croaked the knowing hand. "Ain't I just been tellin' you that a tramp is liable to strike anywhere she's amind. A clearance paper don't give any holt. I was on the 'Sufferin' Queen,' one time when we started from Swansea for Ameriky and brung up in the Chiney Seas. But then agin, the thing works both ways. Tramps is just like Sunday school superintendents. Sometimes they goes right and sometimes they goes wrong. Here we be loaded with 'structional ironwork"—

"Structural ironwork?" put in Smythe eagerly.

"'Structional, I said. Seems to strike you queer, eh? Guess I know what I'm talkin' 'bout."

"I didn't mean anything—except that I

thought 'structional ironwork was funny stuff to be taking to Mexico."

"Well, I dunno. Now you speak 'bout it, seems kinder fishy for a little one horse copper mine to need a whole steamer load of 'structional ironwork."

"Copper mine?"

"You're a regular question box, you are. Yes, that's what I heard. Helped put the cargo aboard, so I know something about it. They say as this stuff is intended to be used in building a dock for a mine down in the Yucatany district of Mexico. But I ain't no fool chicken to swallow everything for real corn. Shouldn't be surprised if we run aground off Cuby, say, and have to jettison our cargo in shoal water. I see a lot of stuff jettisoned that way once, with slings to every piece, ready for a diver to hook on the hoisting tackles. 'Structional ironwork is worth good money in Cuby nowadays, and the duties on flotsam and jetsam don't amount to nuthin' if you stand in with the customs inspectors. And a few days soaking in water don't hurt 'structional ironwork to amount to anythin'."

"Get out o' there you he-men and take your watches," interrupted a mate, coming towards the gossipers and rapidly detailing them to their duties. "You new bully," he went on, addressing Smythe; "leave the deckhands alone. Go ask the engineers to show you the way to paint machinery in oils."

Phidias assumed the usual sulky air of com-

pliance and lurched below, where he was quickly put to work under the rough tuition of a veteran oiler. Not until the watches changed and the vessel was well out to sea, did he have opportunity for careful retrospection and decision.

"Now for executive session," he said to himself, as he lay at rest in a dirty and vermin-infested bunk far down in the steamship's belly. From the other berths sounded the lusty snores of his watchmates. "It is my habit to lay out everything plain, so as to be able to think the same way. Here's the meat of it. I want to marry Mary Carnwood. She really cares for me but is determined never to wed unless both she and her husband-that-is-to-be are poor. Very good. I get rid of my million. That's the first half. My next task is to bankrupt old man Carnwood. Pretty big contract, but I've accomplished even more seemingly impossible feats in the course of my investigations. I go about it in my usual fashion. I pick up trivial clues and follow them carefully along. One by one, they lead to something or other connected with Ludovic Zam. As soon as they so materialize I drop them and begin over again. In this last experience, however, I find myself cornered as it were. I'm not able to quietly turn aside and go back to a fresh start, for the simple reason that I am out on the ocean, with Ludovic Zam aboard of the same ship? There would appear to be a species of fatality in all this. The question is: Shall

I follow the pointing of the arrows and investigate Ludovic Zam, or boldly announce my identity to him, explain if necessary, and ask to be put ashore at the first convenient stopping place? If I was not engaged in my present undertaking I should dearly like to know with what great enterprise this handless man is busied. His expedition to Asia, following upon those rumored martyrdoms by starvation of workers in order to supply him with funds, seems ridiculous, if it were not for the knowledge I happen to have of the man's wonderful mentality. And this trip on a tramp steamship? Not to speak of his new-found ally, lately created secretary of the Wow Chow Mud Bath Corporation of China, Chauncey Maguire. The latter, by the bye, my self-announced rival for the hand of Miss Carnwood. Pshaw! It seems to me that this is a case where I should follow my rule of minding everybody's business, even if it appears to have no tangible aim or connection with my special purposes. One never can tell how things will turn out. If you follow a path which apparently leads away from a house, you are bound to come back to that house again if you keep going in the same direction long enough. Sometimes you have to go around the world, but very often it is only the loop of a carriage-drive. Everything seems to be in circles, large or small. At least, everything works out that way if one stops to think. Let me descend from metaphysics to common-sense. From purely personal

motives I have hitherto refrained from investigating Ludovic Zam. Now he is literally forced upon me. As a matter of fact, his circle is just as likely to bring me to a consummation of my desires as any other. Yes, I've made up my mind. I'll do it."

Then he called aloud, "Hi, there! Hullo, you?"

Phidias accompanied this closing ejaculation by leaping from his bunk and running towards the door leading outward from the dark cabin.

"Strange," he muttered as he slowly came back and resumed his former lazy position. "I was sure that I saw somebody creeping along the deck on his feet and hands."

The continued snoring from the other bunks showed that his companions had not been disturbed.

"Must have been a shadow or a little bilious imagination upon my part," concluded Smythe.

When they were about three days on their passage, Phidias and a few of the other men happened to be passing the galley, bound on some job of work or other. The steward poked his head outside and cried: "You chaps want to let hup hon that bread-cribbin,' you know. Hif you don't get enough to heat, why just say so, hand H'I'll see that you do. H'I never sailed hon hay ship before where H'I couldn't leave hay loaf hor two lying haround, hand find them when H'I wanted to, hagain. H'I don't"—

"Stow your jaw, Lunnon," growled a deck-hand. "I ain't touched your duff."

"None of us has," said another.

"Well hif hit hain't one hof yous, hit's one hof the hothers," persisted the red-faced functionary. "Three days now H'I've missed hay couple hof loaves from the dresser. Hit hain't no"——

But, by this time, the men were out of ear-shot.

Upon that very evening Smythe had occasion to descend between-decks. He was in his bare feet and consequently made but little noise. He heard the sound of water running to waste, close at hand. He knew that one of the big drinking tanks was thereabouts, and, quickly approaching, found and turned off the gurgling faucet.

The voyage was unusually monotonous. The weather continued fine. The engines of the "British Pearl" never slackened their pace appreciably. Land was sighted upon several occasions but always given a wide berth. The rising temperature made it plain that they were heading into tropical waters. The two passengers were rarely seen upon deck. Phidias Rowell Smythe continued to perform the duties of a steamboater, as if to the manner born. Upon the morning of the ninth day from New York the investigator awoke to find the vessel at anchor, about three-quarters of a mile from shore. So far as he could judge, they were well up towards the head of a broad bay. Ex-

cept for a rude sort of dock at which some steam lighters were moored, and a single track railroad of a very temporary looking nature apparently running into the back country, the whole visible coast-line was wild and deserted. The lighters soon came alongside and the nasty work of unloading great weights under such conditions, commenced. Ludovic Zam and Chauncey Maguire went ashore with the first lighter, and soon after a train consisting of two locomotives, many flat cars and one passenger coach, backed down upon the dock. A few minutes later the leading locomotive and the passenger coach started away inland.

On board of the "British Pearl" the work continued with only short intermissions for many weary hours and all hands were tired out and grumbling viciously when, late one evening, the last lighter cast off her fetters and headed for shore. Aided by the darkness and the general confusion, Smythe had managed to slip aboard the barge and hide himself among the piled-up girders. In similar fashion he was able, upon reaching the dock, to keep out of sight and finally established himself amid the hastily arranged load of a flat car. The train started up the road. No particular speed was attempted, nor indeed possible upon such poor ballasting. In about twenty minutes they stopped in front of a cluster of buildings, centering around three or four tall derricks. With the exception of the few train hands the place seemed to be deserted and the investigator was

able to descend unnoticed from his hiding place and prowl around upon a tour of discovery.

"Not much of a railroad either in condition or length," he softly ejaculated, as some few hundred feet ahead of the locomotive he came upon the jagged ends of the two rails sticking vacantly out into space.

Concluding that Zam and Maguire must be close at hand, Phidias edged over in the direction of the buildings, intending to make a hasty inspection, and then endeavor to find a lurking place against the quickly coming sun. Scarcely had the investigator gone ten paces when a number of workmen, carrying lanterns and tools, emerged from the nearest structure and noisily tramped towards the spot he had just left. Phidias hid behind a pile of old sleepers. Sounds of hammering and levering succeeded. Smythe became suspicious and with great caution made his way back to the loaded car. Scarcely had he once more settled himself amongst the ironwork when the train started ahead, and passing over some sort of a temporary trestle was again upon solid roadbed. Speed was duly increased.

"This mine business is only a feint, as I might have known," thought the investigator, much amused over the incident. "If any tourist or other unlikely person should happen along, he or she would be perfectly satisfied that the cluster of huts and the track's end were the limit. But, hey presto! a draw-



bridge is slipped in between the main line and a hidden continuation, and the erstwhile terminus becomes a way station."

The train held on its course. Smythe was dog-tired from the labors and exertions of the past few days and in spite of his strong will dozed off to sleep before he knew. How long he slept it was impossible for him to determine. He was roughly awakened by the train bringing up with a harsh grinding of brakes and noisy groaning of cargo. When he opened his eyes and looked around he could scarcely believe that he saw and heard aright. Hundreds of electric lights illumined the darkness. Under big temporary sheds, steam forgers were beating upon glowing ingots and many other varieties of metal-working machines were at play. Hoisting derricks stalked everywhere swinging their loads from place to place. The clatter of the riveters was continuous. What seemed to resemble frames and skeletons of ships and houses, lined the shore. Beyond, like the softly surging water. It was salt. The brine was in the air. Smythe cautiously crept from out his place of concealment upon the flat car and started towards one of the big machine shops.

"A single stranger among the thousands of workmen who must be employed here, would never be noticed," he thought.

At this moment two men drew near. They were in uniform and armed with rifles.

"Password, please?" drawled one lazily.

"Ludovic Zam," replied Smythe boldly.

"No, you don't. Haven't had that in ten years now. Come, speak up? Can't you remember the countersign your foreman gave you this morning?"

"What if I don't know this password?" queried the investigator.

"Hey!" ejaculated the patrol, excitedly. "You'll go to the guard-house with us, that's all."

"Well, lead on," remarked Phidias composedly. "I'm agreeable."

To the great chagrin of the investigator they ruck off directly away from the busy scene and walked a good mile or more until they reached a handsome cottage with broad verandas on all four sides. This house lay in a little alley, completely out of sight of the work yards. Upon arrival Smythe was ushered to a luxurious bedroom and although he listened carefully heard no noise of bolts or locks being drawn upon him. By this time, fatigue and drowsiness had become overpowering, and throwing himself upon the bed he at once fell to a sound sleep. When he awoke it was broad daylight. A change of clothing of a much more desirable nature than his soiled overalls lay upon a chair close at hand. Through an open door he could discern bathing conveniences in the adjoining apartment. After making his toilet he stepped out upon the broad veranda where he found a tempting breakfast awaiting him. Several native In-

dian women attended to his wants. Three four armed guards, uniformed similarly to captors of the previous evening, strolled and down in front of the house. These were Americans, he felt sure, but although tried to open a conversation with them they only smiled and shook their heads. At breakfast, there were cigars, magazines, even United States newspapers not much more than a week old. Also, a hammock slung in the cool shade of the veranda, as well as various other thoughtful arrangements provided for his comfort.

"Truly, I do not know that I ever heard a prisoner being treated in such a sumptuous manner," said Smythe to himself, with a glacial smile of amusement. "I must experiment a little and try to ascertain my limitations."

After lighting a cigar he carelessly walked down the few steps leading from the veranda to the ground, and having reached a spot well clear of the projecting eaves of the low-roofed building, glanced curiously about. The view was scarcely to the investigator's liking. The cottage lay in the hollow of a small vale. Around was a towering circle of higher ground clad in luxuriant tropical foliage. Directly in front of him a well-worn trail led up the grass and vanished from view at a turning. That was the route by which the guards had brought their captive from the work-shops, upon the preceding evening. Smythe noticed a wall about as high as a man's breast and surmounting

ed by a polished brass knob, standing some few hundred feet diagonally from the corner of the house. A leisurely stroll around the mansion showed him three other similar objects placed in the same fashion. Curious to know their purpose he walked directly towards one. Immediately an armed guard took up position upon an imaginery line drawn between it and the opposite post, and raising his piece pointed it directly at the brass knob upon the one which Phidias was about to approach. The investigator turned upon his heel and passing to the opposite side of the cottage, attempted to go afield. A guard at once assumed the same threatening position as the other. Smythe heard the click of the hammer being raised and felt certain that the sentry would shoot, if the prisoner ventured to step in range.

"Very good," remarked the investigator to himself as he walked slowly back to the house; "the brass-surmounted posts represent my prison limits. It is a generous cell. As big as an ordinary city square and as high as heaven."

For the balance of the day he amused himself as much as possible by smoking, eating, reading, or merely lolling at ease in the hammock; endeavoring to possess his soul in patience for whatever was next to happen. But the following twenty-four hours went by in much the same fashion, and the next, and the next, and so on; until he began to realize that he had been over a week in captivity. It was all very dreary and monotonous, but he had

been absolutely unable to help himself. His meals were served with unfaltering regularity and all manner of attention showered upon him by the Indian servants, but their knowledge of the English language was too scant for extensive conversation or else they were intentionally stupid. The guards outside of the house were changed at set intervals, but differed only in appearance and not at all in their silent watchfulness over his person. Escape at night was just as impossible as in the daytime, for a number of electric light globes, with current brought from the work-yard, kept the square marked out by the four brass-surmounted posts thoroughly illuminated.

"Such a manner of confinement is the fruit of no ordinary brain," concluded Smythe after much pondering. "Should I walk up to the indicated line, it would be suicide and not murder."

He began to chafe under the conditions. He reasoned that from all appearances it was impossible to continue indefinitely. He tried to argue with his sentries, declaring that he had committed no particular crime and asking them to notify their superiors of his wish for a hearing. But they gave little heed to what he said. On the tenth day of his imprisonment he began to feel as if a further continuance of it would cause him to lose his mind. The lack of companionship and the monotony, even though it was of luxury, were proving too much for his highly excitable temperament. There

dividuals who would have grown accustomed, nay positively enjoyed his situation; but not such a one as Phidias Rowell Smythe. Lack of free and independent action was like deadly poison to him.

"Something must be done," he determined. "It has always been a favorite axiom of mine and one proven satisfactorily to me by experience, that no condition of a person's affairs short of death itself, can ever be too desperate for remedy. And, moreover, the decisive action that may change all need not be one of surpassing importance. Just as in the game of chess a single move of a lowly and despised pawn may throw an apparently assured checkmate to the other side; so in the game of life, a splinter of wood, nay, even such an intangible thing as a passing shadow, often produces causes leading up to results far exceeding our most sanguine hopes."

He looked from the guards to the knob-topped posts, and back at the side of the house near him. Then he raised his eyes to the blue dome overhead. A few moments later he was busy with a lot of the older newspapers, a few pieces of wood, and some string. The sentinels watched him curiously but made no comment. In an hour he had manufactured a big paper kite, similar to those known to all English-speaking boys. But to fly a kite one should have a long and fairly strong cord. Smythe had none, nor could he at first find any satisfactory substitute for it. Finally, his eyes lit

upon the hammock in which he had been reclining. It was of the netted variety. To unravel it, carefully picking each tightly-drawn knot apart, seemed like a herculean task; but the kite-maker positively welcomed the diversion. It took him two whole days to accomplish the labor and the result was a line of no great length. The guards consulted together when he had started upon this unraveling, but apparently their jurisdiction was limited, for they made no remonstrance. The Indian women prepared more elaborate meals than ever. They probably thought the white man had gone crazy. Smythe had a bountiful supply of paste ready for use, in the various fatty inaceous foods set before him. The line making accomplished he again turned his attention to the pile of magazines and newspapers. In their advertising pages particularly, he found good black impressions from the larger type. These he clipped out with his penknife. Frequently, he was able to thus secure a piece of paper as large as a quarter of a postage stamp having one side wholly black. With a pencil he drew a certain generous sized design upon both sides of his kite and proceeded to fill in the outline by pasting on the tiny scraps of paper with their black sides uppermost. Upon the fifth morning after commencing operation he had the kite all finished, and with a big black interrogation point “?” upon either side. The Indian servants peered from out their quarters when he proceeded to fly the aerial

machine. The sentries applauded by clapping their hands together and nodding complacently at one another. Perhaps even their share of the imprisoning had begun to pall. A good strong breeze was blowing. Phidias had no difficulty in raising his kite. When he had done so he let it out to the full extent of the cord, tied the end to the veranda rail, and then sat down upon a step and cried like a child. Overhead was the big kite, visible from the work-yard, and mutely appealing for—anything.

Within ten minutes a couple of men appeared, coming along the road leading to the guardhouse. One was Ludovic Zam; the other, Chauncey Maguire. As they drew nearer the faces of the twain evidenced astonishment.

"Mr. Smythe! You here?" ejaculated the handless one.

"A spy from the enemy's camp," murmured the ex-newspaperman suspiciously.

By this time the investigator had completely recovered his composure.

The guards kept at a respectful distance and the three were able to carry on their conversation in private.

"I find some difficulty in explaining matters to you, Mr. Smythe," coldly commenced Zam. "The fact of an intruder being caught within our yards was duly reported to me, but in accordance with my previous orders, no special inquiries were made or indeed allowed. I had dismissed the subject from my mind as a trif-



ling matter. I can assure you, however, that providing no attempt is made to escape you will not suffer any bodily harm and will be released just as soon as it is compatible with the proper protection of our interests. I trust that you have nothing to complain of concerning your treatment here. My instructions were"—

"The only grievance is being imprisoned at all," interrupted Phidias. "What have I done to deserve such usage?"

"Forced yourself where you or your kin are not wanted," quickly retorted Maguire.

Zam hushed his companion with a look and continued: "This ingenious device," pointing upward as he spoke at the still soaring letter kite, "aroused our curiosity as to the personality of the prisoner, and so we made haste to your presence. But I regret to say that might must be right under the circumstances. I have no alternative but to keep you here for a time at least."

"You regard me as some sort of a spy?" quickly asked Smythe.

"No other theory can satisfactorily explain your presence in this place;" remarked the handleless one.

"But what if I should prove that you are mistaken?"

"It will be a difficult task."

The investigator looked fixedly at the two men and suddenly assumed the air of an inquisitor. "Mr. Zam," he said, "you were a client of mine?"

"Yes, and I will cheerfully admit that you fulfilled your part of our agreement."

Maguire seemed amazed. "I did not know this"—he commenced impulsively.

"It was nothing more than a business arrangement involving certain monetary transactions," coolly remarked Zam. "I have had similar connections with others."

"Oh!" in a relieved tone of voice from the ex-newspaperman.

"At our first and only interview you gathered some idea of the peculiar nature of my business," went on Phidias composedly.

"I did, and it was very interesting to me, at the time," replied Zam.

"Knowing so much of my ways of doing things you ought to be able to appreciate what I am going to tell you," went on Smythe. In a few brief sentences he narrated the taking up of the clues, the abandonment of them as soon as they pointed towards Ludovic Zam, the final enforced companionship upon the steam vessel and determination as he had gone so far to proceed, and the rail journey to the present place.

Ludovic listened with an incredulous smile. Maguire gave eager attention and upon Smythe's coming to a pause, exclaimed: "Then it was undoubtedly you that I saw in the 23rd street sewer?"

"Nobody else," retorted Phidias. "That was during my search for a piece of jewelry upon which depended the success of one of my affairs."

"And you have actually followed this strange profession——of investigation, as you call it?"

"Not only followed it but went before, in other words invented the calling. But I want to say that my present effort is not strictly in accordance with the rules which I have evolved. Instead of going along untrammelled to the outcome, as has been my habit in the past, I have started with a definite purpose upon this occasion. Perhaps that is why I seem to be meeting with such slight success."

"And what is this purpose?" carelessly inquired Zam.

"To—er—deprive a certain wealthy individual, whom I do not care to specifically name, of his riches," replied Smythe.

Both the handless one and his companion gave a perceptible start and followed it by exchanging a glance of amusement.

"Would you object if, while depriving this person in whom you are specially interested of his wealth, a number of other similarly situated individuals should share the same fate?" remarked Ludovic.

"Provided no bodily harm comes to them, not at all," answered the investigator promptly.

"Then you had better take the oath and join us," said Zam cordially.

"Join you?" repeated Phidias in some perplexity.

"Yes, I can assert that you are much more likely to accomplish your object allied with us, than operating no matter how skill-

fully in your professional manner. However, I will ask nothing until you understand our whole scheme. If unacceptable, you will simply return to your present prison for a space. Come, let us take a little walk?"

The guards saluted as the three men passed the line of the brass-topped posts, heading towards the trail.

"I have burst from out my cage," cried Smythe, taking a full breath of air and seeming to enjoy it hugely.

"Where are the wires?" queried Maguire wonderingly.

The handless one smiled sadly. He could appreciate the feelings of the investigator. In his tailoring sweat-shop days Zam was also a prisoner, without any material bolts or keys.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CHOICE OF PHIDIAS.

Several hours later Ludovic Zam and Phidias Rowell Smythe stood together upon a slight eminence, which commanded an all-embracing view of the busy scene around them. They had completed an examination of the great plant.

"A dockyard and arsenal combined," said the investigator, nodding his head approvingly.

"Merely one of several, located in out of the way corners, which we are gradually licking

into some sort of shape. It takes more than capital to make the wheels run true and easy. Time and patience are almost as important factors," murmured Zam modestly.

"In addition to ships, guns, arms, ammunition, and all manner of the best modern fighting supplies, which you are manufacturing went on Phidias; "I have seen dozens and dozens of improvements and devices, any single one of which should be invaluable to the possessor."

"Do not imagine for a moment that they are exclusively my own ideas," put in the handle man quickly. "We have many brilliant minds already working for our cause. In fact, the greatest thing of all, the ship 'Indispensable' is a"——

"You are pointing towards that big rocky island out in the bay?" interrupted Smyth questioningly.

"Rocky island?"

"Yes."

"My dear sir, that is not a rocky island, but the painted iron hull of a ship. At least, the best part of the hull is already there. We are putting her together in sections, as it would be hazardous and expensive to launch such a great bulk satisfactorily."

"Good heavens! What is the portentous purpose of this monster?"

"She is intended to be an encyclopedia of warfare," said Zam good-naturedly.

"My brain is in a whirl at the elaborate prepa-

arations for active fighting to which you have already introduced me. I cannot pretend to understand this new phase."

"Let me try to explain. All you have seen, with the possible exception of the auto-mobile field batteries, improved sub-marine torpedo boats, patent fabric armored balloons, and some few others, are practically identical with the military and naval equipments of the leading nations. For our purpose it is necessary to be startlingly original. The 'Indispensable' has been designed, among other things, to surpass all previous models in war vessels."

"But what is she? A gigantic battleship?"

"Yes, and much more. In the first place let me premise by stating that, in spite of her bulk, the 'Indispensable' is capable of being propelled at a fair rate of speed by powerful engines and an elaborate system of propellers working in recessed underwater chambers. At the present moment she is but a huge and shapeless floating mass. I can well appreciate your taking her for a rocky island when seen at this distance. A closer view would show you that she consists of many individual sections joined together, to which additions are constantly being added."

"I see a couple of tugs engaged in towing a great box-like arrangement out to her now," interrupted Phidias, pointing with one hand as he spoke.

"Yes, that is a caisson for the marine slip."

"Is she also a kind of repair vessel?"

"Yes. A floating dock is being fitted at the stern, protected from hostile demonstration by flanking turrets and armored gates. It is capable of receiving the very largest war vessel afloat, or from two to half a dozen minor craft. In connection with this, an ample supply of machinery, tools, and material is to be placed aboard; and the 'Indispensable' will carry such a corps of marine artificers and machinists as would render the task of repairing a damaged ship or fleet comparatively easy, without the risk or necessity of the crippled combatants going to a land port. By reason of her great tonnage the 'Indispensable' is able to easily carry the heaviest armor protection at all or any desired points. Her capacity for warlike stores and munitions will be simply enormous. In addition to her own special bunkers, she can have on board more than twenty-five thousand tons of steam coal, or enough to supply a fleet for some little while."

"She is then, what technical people would term, a moveable naval war base," cried Smythe enthusiastically.

"I object to the exclusive naval classification," went on Zam imperturbably, "and I think you will agree with me when I point out her military features."

"I am all attention," cried the investigator.

"Being, as she is, a ship," went on Ludovic complacently, "you can readily understand that she will have all and every one of the many contrivances which modern ingenuity has de-

vised for the interior economy of a first-class war vessel. But, in addition to all this, the immense size of the 'Indispensable' will render possible some new and unique conditions. She will have quarters, besides those for her own crew, for an army corps of soldiers, together with stores, subsistence, and all equipment for an extended land campaign. Every necessary branch of the service will be satisfactorily provided for and housed. Considerable stretches of open deck-space can be utilized for drill ground purposes. With the aid of tan-bark or a spreading of soft earth, a riding field for the proper daily exercise of the cavalry and field-battery horses is obtainable. Of course, glass enclosed sanitariums for the sick and wounded; together with all other adjuncts of modern medical treatment, are easily possible in this Leviathan's great bulk. Aside from the artillery carried as regular military equipment, the 'Indispensable' will be fitted with her own cannon. These will differ materially from ordinary naval types, both in calibre and mountings. The very largest rifles on disappearing carriages, and siege-mortars in proper pits, such as are at present only installed upon land fortifications, will be screened behind absolutely bombproof emplacements."

"An arsenal! A dockyard! A fleet of transports! A great fortress! All these in one. In other words, a floating Gibraltar," cried the investigator.

"Exactly, you have hit the nail on the head."



"While I am overwhelmed by these wonder to which you so complacently introduce me, my brain cannot conceive the precise uses to which they are to be put."

"Ask me some questions. With one of your keen perception, a mere sentence will convey as much as a whole hour's labored explanation to many men."

"Will you pardon me if I commence at or near the beginning? It is a failing of mine to try and build from the foundations upward."

"That is always a good idea. Proceed with your questions."

"In the first place then, how have you managed to accumulate the vast wealth necessary for the various undertakings upon which you are engaged? Or, more particularly, from whence did you secure those treasure-filled kegs which passed through my own hands?"

"A capital of about three thousand dollars was placed in my possession. With such a sum, almost any thing may be accomplished with proper effort. Moreover, this three thousand dollars was no common money. Every dollar, every cent, every mill, was a sacred tribute, bathed in the lifeblood of martyrdom. It may sound puerile, and yet to me this capital seemed endowed with power far beyond its counted total."

"I have heard of that part of the matter before, and also rumors concerning your further actions. With this small sum in hand you

went to China. At least, so I have conjectured," put in Phidias.

"Yes, but China, large a country as it is, was only a portion of the territory covered in my pilgrimage. I journeyed in Arabia, India, Siam, portions of Persia and Siberia, as well as through the domains of those powerful tribesmen whose allegiance, in spite of the colorings upon the maps, still belongs only to themselves. Asia, the oldest, the least known to Europeans of all the continents, the most thickly populated and the wealthiest, was my field of effort."

"The wealthiest? I had always imagined that Asia was a has-been. That the great bulk of her retrograded races live in filth and abject poverty?"

"You are right so far as the common people are concerned, but, nevertheless, the wealth of Asia as a whole, in spite of the vast tribute she has paid to European conquerors from the time of Alexander the Great down to the present, remains well nigh incalculable. When I say wealth I mean, principally, gold, silver, precious stones, costly fabrics, rare spices, and the like. These valuable commodities have been hoarded up by the countless sects of priests, not for centuries only, but for ages. You must remember that several of the Asiatic nations reckon such periods as twenty thousand years, and, moreover, their wise men bring forward confirmatory astronomical facts and figures to prove this awe-inspiring chronology. Be this

item as it may, their accumulated magazines of treasure, carefully hid away from both the eyes and knowledge of the common multitude, are wonderful to contemplate.

"Then I presume that you have personally seen these stores of great wealth?"

"Some few of them, at least."

"But how was it that you, a barbarian of the outside world, entered; where millions of the own race are denied admittance?"

"I came to the head-men with a mission. It took time and trouble, but I finally won my way. Being able to talk and write the languages helped me considerably. In fact, without this, I could never have gained their confidence."

"But there are many languages in Asia."

"I know them all, or rather, the more important ones. I have over seventy-three languages at command. I acquire a new one every little while. I am now learning the crude tongue spoken by these Indian tribes around here. But to return to the subject of the vast hidden wealth of Asia. Let me illustrate. Scattered all over that huge continent, more particularly of course in the thickly settled portions, are innumerable shrines and temples; some most marvelous architectural creations, but the majority either dilapidated or originally puny and despicable. All of these have some treasure store but the appearance of the building is no criterion as to quantity. The palatial Buddhist temple might possess but a single jewel, while

the lowly collection of mud-huts a few hundred yards distant, covering the alleged footprint of a god, could have a perfect labyrinth of underground chambers, piled to their ceilings with the rich donations made by kings and rulers in the course of a thousand bygone prosperous years. And speaking of these potentates reminds me that in spite of so many of the dynasties having been stripped of dominions or allowed to retain but a pretence of authority, they have yet managed to hold on to a generous share of their former personal possessions. Taking British India alone, if the total private wealth of the hundreds of small rajahs and princes now living in semi-regal state could only be proven, the figures would astound the world. The personal jewel treasures alone of the Gaikwar of Baroda, were appraised by experts some few years ago, at the sum of \$15,000,000, and this is not considered by any means exceptional. At the grand darbar held at Delhi, the ancient capital of the Mogul Empire, when the late Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, the costumes of the native princes represented hundreds of millions of dollars in value. Such a small item as the gloves of one of them, the Maharajah Holhair, for instance, were incrustated with diamonds and other precious stones to the value of over \$200,000. But enough of detail. Take my word for it the value of the gold and jewels secreted away throughout Asia is beyond the powers of either

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our imagination or computation. The millions which have been turned over to me are not even so much as an appreciable drop in the general bucket."

"What have you given in exchange for this consideration, for no human beings, Asiatic or American, are apt to part with valuables for nothing?"

"Arms, ammunition, guns, and field equipment, to commence with. Furthermore, to carry out my agreement, I shall soon supply them with much larger quantities of the same, as well as warships and more elaborate materials."

"You intend to equip these hordes of barbarians so that they can dangerously compete with civilized armies?"

"I have already done so, in part. The mutterings of the coming storm have been heard in China. This will extend over the whole continent of Asia."

"It is awful. Thousands, nay millions of lives will be lost."

"These fanatics will be quelled again in time. It is but a sacrifice of other nations to help our own. Not ethical, to be sure, but strictly in keeping with modern competitive ideas. A case of the survival of the fittest."

"How do you mean? In what way will this tremendous disturbance throughout Asia help the United States?"

"As the storm increases, our company's forces at Wow Chow can be augmented, without

suspicion. Or rather, the nations of the earth be so busy that they will not have time to bother about small affairs of others. Meanwhile, our councils throughout the United States are organizing and educating the masses. Not only individuals, but various powerful leagues and societies are being brought into close touch with us. When the time is ripe our fleets will suddenly abandon Wow Chow, as many ships as the barbarians do not require can be withdrawn from our secret dockyards, and, moreover, the 'Indispensable' will be available."

"Where?"

"In blockading the ports of the United States and otherwise controlling the situation."

"What! This is"—

"Wait. Our many affiliated organizations throughout the country will have all internal matters well in hand."

"But this is revolution."

"Yes, but revolution in which no single gun need be fired or weapon drawn. In this it will differ from every other similar event in history. Our forces will be so powerful and well organized that resistance will at once be recognized as useless by the comparatively trifling aristocratic class."

"But are you sure that a majority of the more numerous middle class people—who are frequently referred to as the real backbone of the country. Are you sure that they will welcome such an innovation?"

"Perhaps not, but that is a trifle."

"You astonish me."

"For selfish reasons of present personal comfort the bulk of the middle class citizens always oppose radical changes at first. Later on, they become sturdy converts to necessity. In the war for Independence a large proportion of the middle class natives of the thirteen colonies were in favor of England. In fact, up to the time of the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, some of the provinces had furnished more recruits to the Royalist armies than to the Continental. This last will serve to show you one side of the matter. But everything has at least two sides and some—three, four five, and even up in the hundreds. Without going into detailed arguments I would point out that the selfish middle class will follow the lead of the aristocrats and submit to the inevitable. This will be forced upon them by the actions of our own disciplined adherents and the enormously preponderating numbers of the poor and oppressed classes, who will naturally be with us."

"But why such a general revolution? Have we not already one of the best governments on earth?"

"Yes, but it is very far from what it should be."

"Nothing human is ever perfect."

"Granted, but improvement is always possible."

"I know that political jugglery and the pow-

ers of grasping corporations in our dear native-land are fast duplicating the general poverty and wretchedness of the older nations; but”—

“And if allowed to go on unchecked, the condition of the common people, in other words the great bulk of the population of the United States, will be as bad, if not worse, as the downtrodden peasantry of the Bourbons of France.”

“How can your revolution, even if it should work out exactly as you plan, really mend matters? From what you have hinted I understand that the rich will be deprived of their belongings. This can but” —

“Not only the rich. Everybody will be treated alike.”

“The dearly saved pennies of the working classes, as well as the home dwellings of those who have spent years of economy and frugality in securing them! To be taken away?”

“All property of every kind will become vested in the whole people.”

“This is anarchy.”

“Not at all. Everything can go on as if nothing had happened; merchants trade, factories produce, newspapers print, railroads run, and so on. The only alteration, for the time being, will scarcely show upon the surface. Those in proprietorship will continue to operate their holdings as heretofore. They will be considered in charge of public trusts, as it were.”

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"But can such a condition maintain? Commerce is most delicate."

"I see no logical reason against it. However, if necessary, it could be enforced for a brief term; until a permanent organization, framed by a committee of the brainiest men in the republic, be ready."

"What kind of an organization?"

"How can I tell? I merely clear the ground for a fresh national start. The Declaration of Independence was a good thing in its day, but new centuries require new means of relief. The acknowledged experts in governmental theories will be invited to submit their plans—single tax, socialistic, communistic, and so on. Those which appeared to be the most feasible could be selected and put to the general vote of the people. The method endorsed by the largest number to constitute the new order of things."

"But most of these theoretical forms of government have been experimented with on a small scale and found to be more or less imperfect in practice?"

"Granted. We are not looking for perfection. Merely something better than the chain-bound democracy of the present."

"But supposing, for instance, that the single-tax idea is adopted? I mention this for the reason that the clean start with all property-rights vested in the whole people, would be just such an ideal condition for its application as the theorists require. Are you not aware

that insidious actions upon the part of unscrupulous individuals will slowly but surely force a return to the state of the oppressed many living and working for the benefit of the masterful few? Put a hundred men on an island, you know, and in time a small minority of them will easily control the rest."

"Another Declaration of Independence, or a revolution such as we are contemplating, will then be necessary," replied Ludovic Zam imperturbably. "But that is for the concern of future generations. If we can flush out all the sewers of corruption and dominancy that now control our country and start perfectly fresh and clean, it may be centuries before our government again retrogrades sufficiently for popular interference. The Rhetras of Lycurgus kept Sparta very nearly intact for five hundred years."

The pair stood in absolute silence for many minutes.

"Of one thing I am certain," resumed Phidias at length, "and that is, you yourself are absolutely necessary to the success of this gigantic philanthropic plan. Without your leadership the whole fabric must fall to the ground."

Ludovic answered not a word, but gazed thoughtfully upward at the blue sky overhead.

"I want to say frankly," continued Smythe with a faint smile; "that unless the rich man whom I have in mind is deprived of his wealth in a reasonable time, it will scarcely benefit

me. How long before you will be able to carry out your design to a consummation?"

"It may be ten years or one. I do not know. Time is nothing in such an undertaking as this. Every fresh convert, however, especially one of your own capabilities, brings it so much nearer."

"I trust more to chance than to reason," cried the investigator; "I believe deep down in my heart that yours is a noble and commendable purpose. But my own innate selfishness and worldly judgment would inevitably cause me to refuse to join you. Therefore chance, and not cold calculating reason, shall decide the question for me."

"How?"

"Note that big cannon some ten or fifteen paces distant?"

"Yes."

"Also this pebble which I pick up from the ground at our feet," went on Phidias, suitably action to the words.

"Yes."

"I am going to toss the pebble towards the cannon. If it light and stay upon the gun, will assist you individually to the best of my humble powers. If upon the contrary, it fall to the ground, I can only return to my captivity at the guardhouse."

"But the chances seem enormously against the first. The top surface of the cannon being rounded, will almost inevitably cause the pebble to roll off, even if it lands."

"Precisely. I must proportion the chances to cold and selfish reason."

"Then the odds apparently are millions to one against your joining us."

"That is my idea of it."

"Very good."

"You are willing to allow me to decide in this manner?"

"Yes."

Phidias stopped short and turned around to gaze at Ludovic. The latter smiled but made no comment. The investigator resumed his former position and carefully tossed the pebble. It did not even light upon the top of the cannon, but hit one side of it. Nevertheless, the stone adhered fast to the spot.

"We have won," remarked Zam coolly.

"Yes," replied Smythe cordially; "but what is this? Enchantment?"

"No, scientific fact."

"You have magnetized the cannon for some purpose of experiment?"

"Yes."

"And I presume that the pebble I picked up happened to contain iron ore?"

"All the rock hereabouts is highly ferruginous."

"Very good," replied Phidias. "I accept the dictum. I trust you will apportion me to special and arduous duty."

"I have already selected your detail."

"You must have been certain of my conversion," remarked the investigator smilingly.

"As sure as I was of the outcome of your novel appeal to chance," said the other.

"I am eager to get to work."

"The day after to-morrow you will leave here by a special steamship and proceed southward, not opening your letter of instructions until in sight of Cape Horn."

"Why not start at once?"

"I admire your impatience, but the vessel I intend for this expedition is not quite ready. Besides, we are going to test a novel form of craft tomorrow, and I should be glad of your company and opinions."

"Another marvel, eh? Truly, I shall be disappointed if it does not prove to be well nigh incredible?"

"Wait and see."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### RIPPLES AND BUBBLES.

"Still another outsider is giving us the honor of his company," announced Chauncey Maguire, coming up to the veranda of the cottage where Zam and Smythe lay stretched off in hammocks.

"This gentleman is no longer to be considered an outsider," put in the handless one, indicating Phidias with a nod of the head. "He has joined our conspiracy."

An unpleasant expression darkened the face of the ex-newspaper man. It was very nearly

in the nature of a scowl. He made no direct verbal reply. The investigator was in a sort of reverie and neither saw nor heard anything.

"Has this intruder been taken to the guard-house and made as comfortable as possible, in keeping with my orders?" went on Ludovic, giving no heed to the evident discontent of his lieutenant.

"No," retorted Maguire abruptly.

"Why not?"

"The guards have failed so far to secure him."

"He has been seen, I presume?"

"Yes, by a number of the workmen, but the patrols appear to be completely baffled in their search. It is scarcely to be wondered at, for the noisy bustling yard, with its long ranges of open sheds and piles of material, makes a capital dodging place."

"Appears to be a pretty good excuse. I'll wager that last statement is not original with yourself?" queried Zam knowingly.

"What?"

"Sounds logical enough. Didn't some of the pursuers formulate it?"

"Why—er—yes. I believe so," answered Maguire confusedly.

"One of our soldiers?"

"Yes."

"Could you identify him?"

"I'm afraid not. I took no special notice of the speaker."

"I wish that you had."

"You seem to be suspicious."

"I am. Under our system of continual interchange of passwords and regular inspection tours, it is absolutely impossible for an intruder to remain undiscovered without"——

"Well, you hesitate?"

"Without aid from——the inside."

"Can you question the loyalty and devotion of our specially chosen watchmen?"

"Human nature is very far from perfection. Betrayal of trust is one of the penalties that must always be expected, in dealing with our fellow-men. There are bound to be traitors, willing to sell their comrades. If one Judas among twelve such individuals as were the apostles, there may well be a hundred of his like in our own ranks. However, in the regular changes of the guards to-morrow, this intruder will"——

"Does Mr. Smythe know anything concerning another person of his own investigating turn of mind?" interrupted Maguire, asking the question pointedly of the dreamy Phidias.

"Eh! What?" replied the latter, rising abruptly to a sitting posture in the hammock.

"The guards report a stranger lurking in our midst," explained Zam complacently. "Had you any companion or attendant?"

"No."

"Do you remember any suspicious personage upon the 'British Pearl,' for all other approaches having been well patrolled this would seem to be the only plausible means of ingress?"

"No," answered Smythe in truthful accents.

"Very good," quickly rejoined the handless one. Then turning to Chauncey. "Have the commandant issue a notice that any bribe given or offered will be doubled by me and the receiver pardoned, if immediate confession is made. Under the circumstances we must fight with all manner of tools. Meanwhile, let the search be vigorously prosecuted."

Ludovic Zam paused abruptly, and his eyes took on a peculiarly acute expression.

"I wish to be alone," he continued after a few seconds, in quiet accents.

Maguire summoned Phidias away with a slight inclination of the head. The two young men left the veranda and strolled leisurely toward the shore. The handless one did not appear to notice their departure.

"What is it?" questioned the investigator, when they were some distance along the path.

"This man's brain is too strong for his body," said Maguire in earnest tones.

"One would most imagine that he had fallen into a mild trance. No, no. His eyes were too full of life."

"Some wonderful idea or plan is doubtless absorbing his attention. I have frequently seen him in similar enwrapped contemplation. From the moment of the seizure, as it were, he takes but little note of what may be happening around him. Invariably, however, upon a return to ordinary conditions, he speedily unfolds some new marvel in the line



of invention or reasoning as the result of these ponderings."

Phidias turned to gaze at the lonely figure upon the veranda, shrugged his shoulders, and with an impatient toss of the head, cried: "Can I not be of present assistance in some department, while waiting for tomorrow? I have well nigh rusted up during the past ten days."

"Be assured that there is ample opportunity, if you really desire it," replied Maguire coldly. "So much has to be done in a great hurry, that, despite our best efforts, numerous matters are in a chaotic condition. For one thing, the office work and particularly the payroll is frightfully mixed up. If you"—

"Where?" questioned the investigator eagerly, interrupting his companion. "Let me get at it. A few hours hard work at the desk will be a better tonic than anything in the drug line."

"This way," returned the other, still maintaining his frigid manner.

Without any more conversation Maguire led Phidias inside a small building, pointed at a long table piled up with time slips and overseers' reports, and departed. The investigator immediately commenced upon the task which would have well nigh appalled a veteran accountant. Native servants brought the office worker food and drink, and long after midnight ushered him to a bedroom in the central cottage. As Smythe passed in, completely fagged out from the mental and physical ef-

forts he had been putting forth, the bright tropic moon showed him the form of Ludovic Zam, reclining in the hammock, apparently occupying the same position assumed more than twelve hours previous.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A VOICE.

Next morning the three men stood upon the margin of a high dock, gazing down at an odd-looking marine structure which lay alongside.

"I see no smokestack, engines, or propelling apparatus of any kind," cried Smythe.

"Nevertheless, this torpedo boat has made very high speed upon previous tests," remarked Zam complacently.

"Torpedo boat?"

"Yes. She is built to carry and discharge seven torpedoes of a specially powerful type. One would be amply sufficient to blow up an ordinary battleship."

"The hull seven of 'em has been put aboard, sir," reported a grizzled superintendent. "You said as how this time you wanted to try her at exact service water line."

"Quite right too, Morgan," replied Zam. Let us embark, gentlemen," he continued, addressing the young men. They followed him down the gangway, and the wharf hands cast off the small hawsers which held the craft to the dock.

This torpedo boat, as Zam had denominated her, although a little odd in design and from the absence of any visible machinery, looking strangely bare abovewater, was by no means ultra-sensational to the sight. She was of cigar shape, pointed at both ends much after the ordinary model of her type, but without guns, davits, ventilators, or any other superstructure marring the smoothness of her deck. About the center, a cock-pit was sunk in for the accommodation of the crew. Zam seated himself facing the bow, at a small table or shelf covered with brass knobs and levers. These had loops of soft leather attached to their extremities. Smythe, deeply interested, took up a position very nearly at the handless skipper's elbow. Maguire sat as far astern as possible, although the limits of the cockpit were trifling. Nevertheless, he was distant about six feet from the other two. Leaning over the table, Zam commenced to operate the various levers and knobs thereon, using his teeth upon the leather attachments for this purpose. Almost immediately the little craft began to move rapidly over the water heading directly out to sea. Every little while Ludovic would readjust a knob or lever. Each time he did so Smythe noticed that the speed of the boat increased. Soon they were rushing ahead at a tremendous rate.

"How fast are we going?" gasped the investigator.

"Thirty miles an hour, as I speak; very nearly forty miles an hour, in a few seconds,"

replied Zam, again proceeding to pull and haul upon the various strapped attachments.

"How fast now?" queried Phidias. He could see that their speed was greater.

"Fifty miles an hour," promptly answered Ludovic.

"May I ask how fast it is possible for this boat to travel?"

"That is not the proper question."

"No? I don't understand"——

"The idea is, not how fast she could go, but how fast we could stand her going."

"I can partially appreciate one side of your astonishing statement, at least. Even in the shelter of the rail as we are, my breath is difficult to manage. The sensation seems very much like when one is coasting down a steep hill."

"Exactly. We are by this time running more than sixty miles an hour, or as fast as the best express trains upon the finely ballasted railroads of the mainland. It would scarcely be comfortable to run the boat beyond this, under present conditions. Later on I intend to devise some such covering for the crew as a heavy glass dome, with suitable ventilators. So equipped, a greater degree of speed can be withstood."

"You speak as if her possible limit will not ever then have been reached."

"Precisely. It would scarcely be advisable, even when so improved, to attempt to speed the boat at her full power."

"I must confess that if I had not already

been so strongly impressed, I should now be incredulous. But, with the experience of the past twenty-four hours in mind, I can believe everything you state, no matter how astonishing. At what rate of speed do you expect this craft to travel when furnished with the shelter for her crew?"

"It is hard to estimate accurately, when novel conditions are liable to thrust themselves among our calculations. However, perhaps it will be sufficiently conservative to reckon on about one hundred miles an hour."

"What? Nearly two miles a minute?"

"Yes. But while undoubtedly practical to run at this speed for a considerable length of time, it would scarcely be economical or expedient to do so. A good transposition of an old epigram is, 'Whatever is worth doing is worth doing as well as it's worth doing.' A torpedo boat that could make the rate I have mentioned for a short bursts, say of five or ten minutes duration, would be all sufficient."

"Undoubtedly."

"The great trouble with even the fastest torpedo boats of the modern navies, is that they must almost invariably be destroyed in order to work their will upon big opponents. Granting them a speed of thirty-five miles an hour, which few can really attain in actual service, it is very nearly an impossibility for them to dash up to a watchful warship, discharge their clumsy projectiles, and escape *beyond* the zone of devastation created by the

sputtering rapid-fire and machine guns of the doomed leviathan. With a boat capable of running nearly three times as fast, however, the problem is immensely simplified. Such rapid advance and retreat would seem to prevent even the most quick-witted and ready marksmen from properly sighting or discharging their pieces. A combination of chances, such as the flying boat herself coming in exact range of a discharging cannon, would be about the only danger to expect; and such a concatenation of circumstances, is, of course, by no means likely."

"You make me hungry for more information. How fast would it be theoretically possible, do you imagine, for this boat to go?"

"That is hard indeed to answer. One way to approximate would be to consider the navigators from which this craft is modelled."

"Do you mean to say that this boat has counterparts upon the seas?"

"Millions, billions, and trillions of them; not on the seas exactly, but in them."

"Fish?"

"Of course."

"Ah!"

"Moreover, I would also include among her prototypes the whale species, which, while not strictly a fish, has very similar methods of propulsion. The swimming speed of this gigantic mammal is enormous. Sailors have frequently averred that a sore-wounded whale, when fastened on with harpoons, has towed a heavy-laden boat for long distances at a pace

exceeding the gait of an ordinary railroad train. When free and in full possession of all powers, a whale can easily circle round a swiftly sailing or steaming ship, as has been demonstrated upon numerous occasions. Nevertheless, this animal is one of the slowest moving of the creatures dwelling in the seas. By reason of the difficulties in the way of proper calculation, this question of the speed at which fish can travel, has not so far received any considerable share of attention. However, I have personally tested the little minnow when confined in a long and narrow glass tank. According to the best instruments that I could construct, this tiny fish frequently exceeded a rate of over twenty miles a minute during its flashlike dartings. The earth could be circumnavigated in a day upon this basis. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the boat upon which we are traveling is my first attempt along this line, and, I fear, only a very crude imitation of a real fish. It might possibly travel five miles a minute, if my clumsy substitutes for the Creator's surpassing mechanism would stand the strain, which I am somewhat inclined to doubt."

"But where is this mechanism and how does it differ from the universally used propellor?" asked Phidias.

"There can be no adequate comparison. The propellor is wholly mankind's absurd wheel device as arranged for marine propulsion. The same idea in other forms is found in carts, bicycles and locomotives. You must sure-

ly have remarked that there are no such things as wheels in any portion of animated nature. We seem to have been unable to grasp the simple system of leverage, as applied to such enormous economic advantage by the Maker. The machinery of this boat, such as it is, lies down in the main body. This portion which we occupy is a superstructure, like a howdah upon the back of an elephant. We are riding upon the back of an artificial fish. That is the thing in a nutshell. I have managed to construct a metallic body with supple tails and fins, operated by levers and chains, patterned upon the bones, ligaments, and integuments of a Spanish mackerel, one of the fastest swimming fish of its size in the ocean."

"And your power?"

"Instead of stored food energy I use stored electricity."

"Marvelous! We are already out of sight of land."

"Yes, the boat has traveled at least forty miles while we have been conversing. It is time to return."

Zam manipulated the keys a trifle and the craft made a short circuit and started upon the homeward route without any perceptible cessation in her speed.

"I am pleased with the fish-boat," began the handleless man, diffidently; "but unless I am greatly mistaken, the fruit of my last night's soliloquy will make it seem very trivial by comparison. To outline the idea roughly, I contemplate"——



A shrill whistle sounded in their midst. Smythe was irritated at the interruption. Zam had stopped abruptly and turned his head towards Maguire. The latter appeared to be thunderstruck for a moment; then smiled, and said in a relieved tone of voice: "The speaking tube from the storage battery room."

"But there should be nobody below deck," remarked Ludovic.

"I know it. Must have been drunk or fallen asleep, or something, and left aboard when they were getting the boat ready this morning. I'll see what's wanted." The ex-newspaperman blew back down the tube and placed an ear to the receiver.

"Is this Ludovic Zam?" inquired a voice.

"No," simply replied the wondering Maguire.

"Very well. I regret that there is so much company aboard but it cannot be helped," went on the questioner. "Now don't waste time asking for whys and wherefores, but just listen and do exactly as I tell you. I'm going to allow only three seconds from when I finish talking. Three seconds, mind you, no more and no less. It will scarcely leave you time to give my full message to Ludovic Zam, but what of that. Are you ready? The next will be my last sentence. Tell Ludovic Zam that Harry the hunchback fails to see wherein all these wonderful operations can accomplish anything towards the benefit of the weak and oppressed, and, consequently, he is about to fulfil his vow of revenging the selfish murder of the martyrs of the Allied Councils."

Quick as a flash Maguire's well-drilled brain gauged the possibilities of a desperate man, in conjunction with the high explosives in the torpedoes below deck. Three seconds is scant time for action, but sufficient for the contemplation of a whole life, in extremity.

Maguire thought of himself. He could be saved, at least. Then he dismissed the idea as an unworthy one. Ludovic Zam! The ex-newspaperman had imbibed all the portentous theories of this harshly nurtured reformer. He never doubted for a moment but that the successful assassination of this handleless man would mean a dire loss to civilization. Without Zam, Maguire felt certain that the great scheme for the rejuvenation of the greatest nation in history could never be carried forward to its fruition. Upon the fate of Ludovic depended that of the millions of laborers, over whom the fiendish shadow of practical serfdom and body-slavery for a starving wage, seemed to Chauncey to be relentlessly drawing. So reasoned in such a minute portion of time as to be impossible of expressing, the ardent disciple of this avowed revolutionist. What mattered the dastardly attempt if only Ludovic Zam was saved!—This other man, Phidias Smythe?—Ah!—Mary Carnwood loved the fellow!—The overheard conversation between Mary and Phidias, upon that moonlit evening, beside the ripple-swept beach of Shelter Island, had left no clinging doubts in the mind of the ex-newspaperman—The simple remembrance of one girl's smile blotted out

the vision of the wretched, despairing multitudes—With the strength of desperation, Maguire leaped towards the investigator, grappled, and threw him overboard.

Almost as the indignant Smythe struck the surface there sounded a terrific explosion. He was born high up on a whirling column of water and then sucked back again to the depths. He came to the top again with just sufficient consciousness left to roll over on his back and float. Some few moments later he peered cautiously around. Not a single sign was there of his late companions or the wonderful fish boat. Only the still agitated waters, and beyond them, the landless horizon of the sea.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE LAST KNOT IN THE SKEIN.

Another twelve-month had rolled along its undeviating course. A strong and sturdy young man, browned by the sun and seasoned with the salt breeze of the ever-pure ocean, strode easily up that great central artery of New York City called Broadway. His suit of blue pilot cloth and flannel shirt low upon the neck, betokened the deep-sea sailor; even if a canvas bag blackened with the mildew of long voyaging and held tenderly under one arm, had not furnished additional evidence of the same.

It was early in the morning hours and upon every hand were crowds—men, women, girls,

boys; hurrying to the scenes of their daily labors. Many of them paused to gaze a moment upon the openfaced mariner. He seemed like another being to these white-livered, narrow-chested products of the city's body-wearing workshops. His very presence appeared to charge the surrounding atmosphere with a subtle something which caused stooped scriveners to temporarily fling back their deformed shoulders and step out after the proper fashion of beings created in God's own image. The precocious, cigarette-inhaling urchins, who swaggered along the curbs, sniffed disdainfully. Several of the maidens, with forms and faces yet undefiled from the contaminations of their surroundings, gazed wistfully at the rugged stranger; even while the thought of the home which depended upon the unnatural machine-driving, hurried them along to the cheerless labor troughs.

Two young and well dressed dandies of upper tendom now appeared, gloves and swinging canes in hand, walking briskly side by side, downtown. The sailor seemed to be startled at the sight of them, but, nevertheless, passed by unnoticed, with smiling face.

"Twemendous amount of capital wequired foah this new twust," one was saying.

"S'more stocks. Good thing f'r us, 'nyhow," replied the other, snapping his disengaged fingers in the air. "Only hope th' next combine"—

But by this time they had passed out of hearing.

Just at the corner of Grand street the sailor came to an abrupt halt and his canvas ditty bag fell to the pavement. A young woman, plainly but neatly dressed in some black clinging fabric, gave an exclamation of astonishment and stopped beside him.

"Miss Carnwood!" ejaculated the sailor.

"Mr. Smythe!" returned the girl in a voice of unconscious thankfulness.

"What does this mean?" went on the man hurriedly.

"Nay, my sex entitles me to the first answer," she replied with a charming blush. "You disappeared very mysteriously, if you remember. Where did you go? What have you been doing? And why are you dressed like a common sailor? You see that I do not limit my questions, but"——

"Threw away—er—lost all my money," commenced Phidias abruptly. "Went for a trip on the water. Was shipwrecked. Picked up by vessel and had to work my passage very nearly around the world in order to get back. Now its your turn?"

"I wish I could tell my story in as few words," replied the girl, with a smile illuminating her sunken cheeks. "Papa got caught in a corner as they call it and lost all of his money. I heard that he had incurred the enmity of—I scarcely dare mention names in this public place——It was only over a trifle, but, somehow——I do not pretend to understand the ins and outs. At any rate it had *something* to do with not being able to realize

enough ready money at a critical time. Some say that dear papa made matters worse by being stubborn, but I do not know. He was ruined at last, and—found dead in bed one morning. There was only a line to me to say that he loved his daughter too much to see her in poverty from his own fault. As if”——

“Don’t distress yourself by going into the details now, darling,” interrupted the audacious young man. “I can see that we are attracting attention.”

“I have got my wish at last,” she went on, while the tears trickled unheeded from her glorious eyes. “I am poor, but”——

“So am I,” interrupted Phidias, picking up his ditty bag.

“It is getting late,” began the girl hysterically. “I must hurry or I shall likely be discharged from”——

Smythe deliberately put down the ditty bag again, and taking Mary in his strong arms kissed her reverently upon the forehead.

The thronging crowds took time to turn their heads and make audible comments, but nothing more.

“If you are in the same mind as you once were,” said the investigator, “you shall, in a very few minutes, have a position from which death itself cannot force you.”

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It is summer time again. Upon the one hand are the waters of the great bay, laving the pebble-strewn shore; upon the other, the planted fields and patches of green-clad trees. ~~Rose~~

land Cottage basks fair in the glorious sun of mid-day. The garden about the house is alive with gorgeous blossoms, scenting the already sweet air with their dainty fragrance. From the barnyard comes an occasional whinny of horse, grunt of hog, or triumphant crow of chanticleer. Out in the fields a couple of men are busy at the long furrows.

Upon the front veranda, embowered in its swathings of sweetest honeysuckle, a pure-faced woman is standing at a churn. The old straw hat and gingham dress make a picture which silks or velvets would have marred. Her bare and beautifully rounded arms look like sculptured ivory. A hale and hearty man, in rough homespun suiting, has one hand thrown caressingly upon her shoulder. A few feet distant stands a cradle, its tiny occupant asleep, with one pudgy fist thrust defiantly out from under the lace-trimmed coverings.

"What a coincidence!" the man is saying, pointing with one hand, first at the road along which a noisy coaching party is driving; and then at the bay, where speeds a jaunty steamer yacht. "Do you remember the 'Vindacona' and Fogey's 'twap?'"

The woman nods her head gravely.

"Do you regret what we have lost, dear?" asks the man.

"Regret! Why, they surely would envy us if they only knew."

\* \* \* \* \*

[Reader, reader, answer true,  
Is the riddle plain to you?]







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